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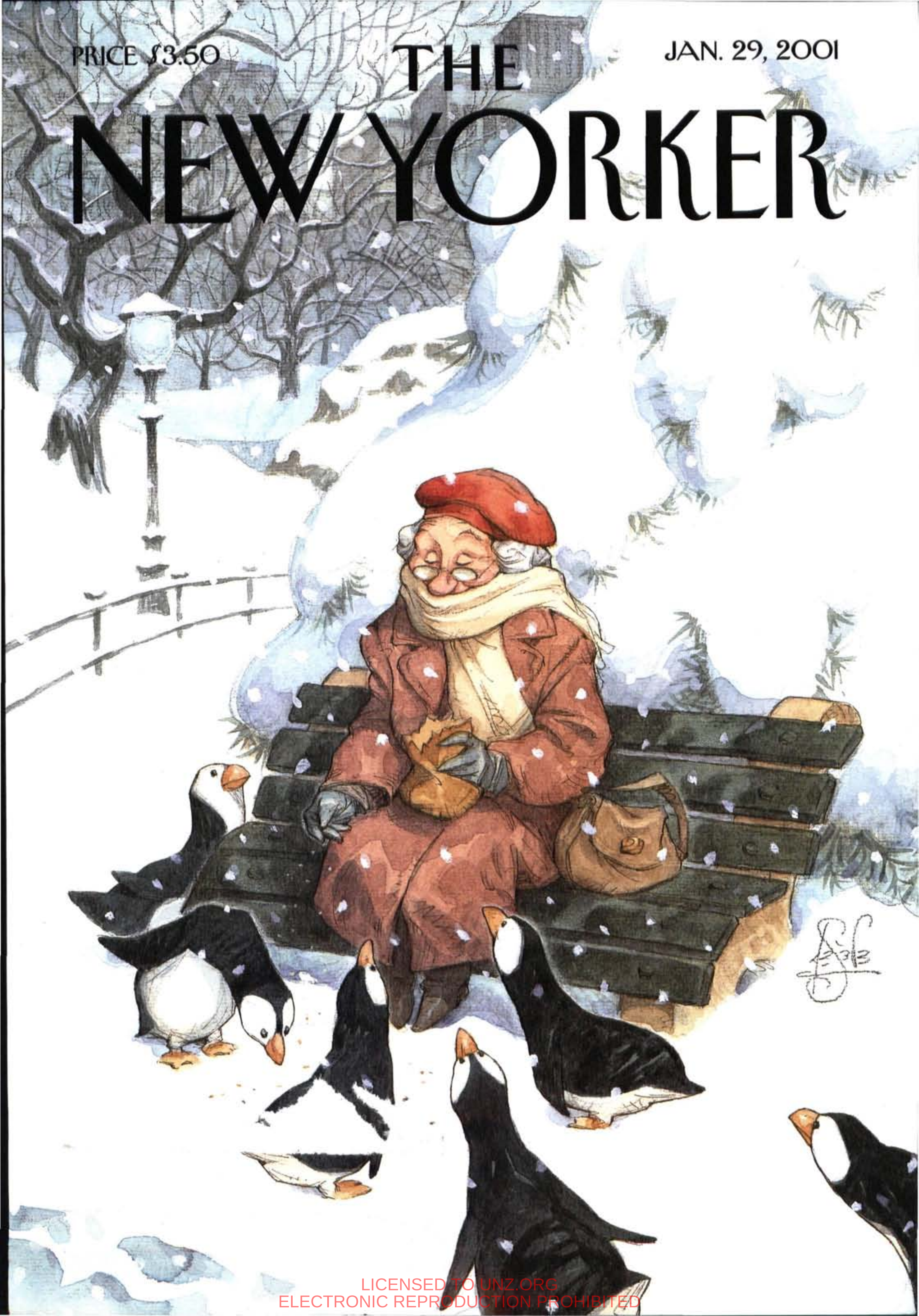

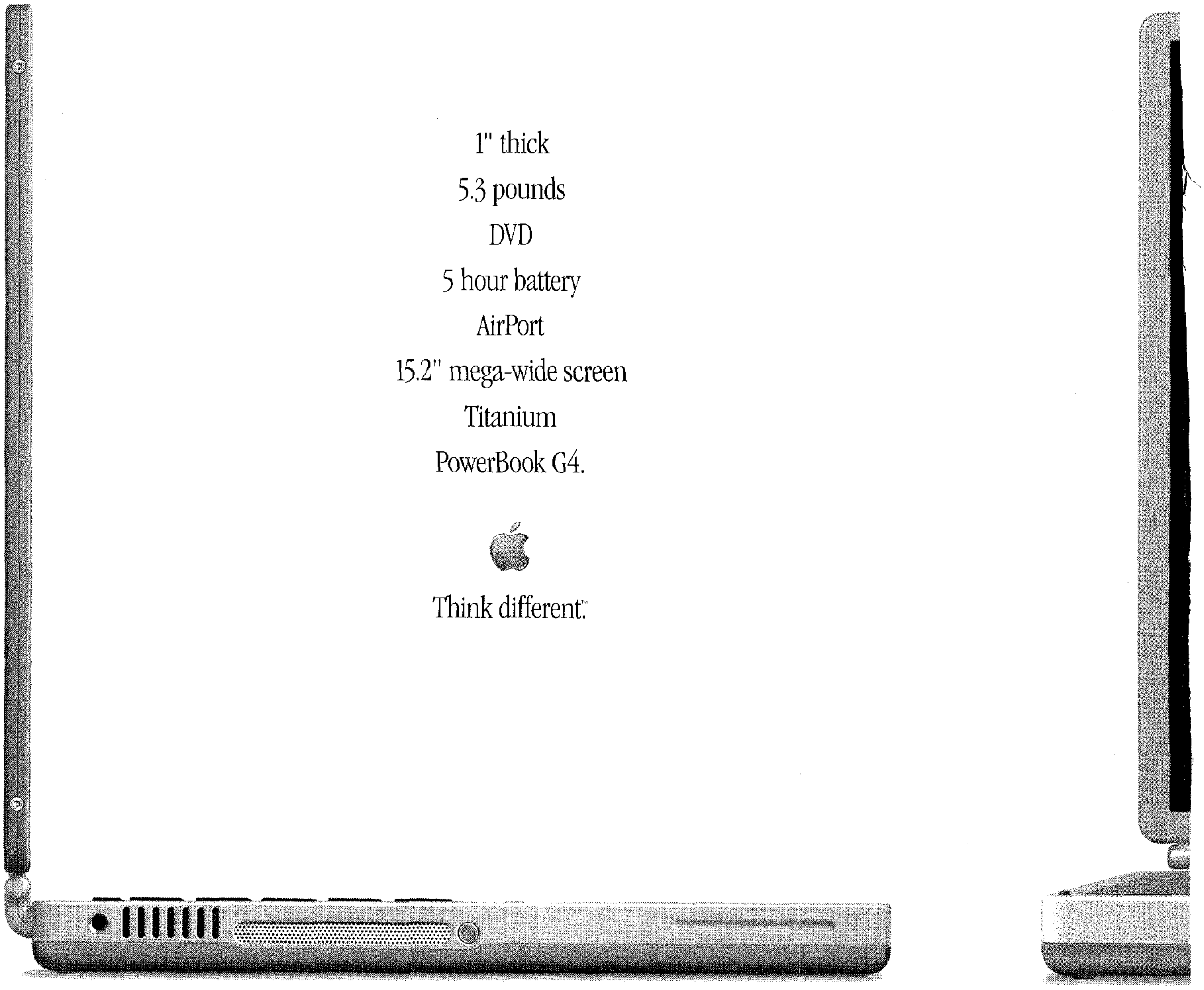
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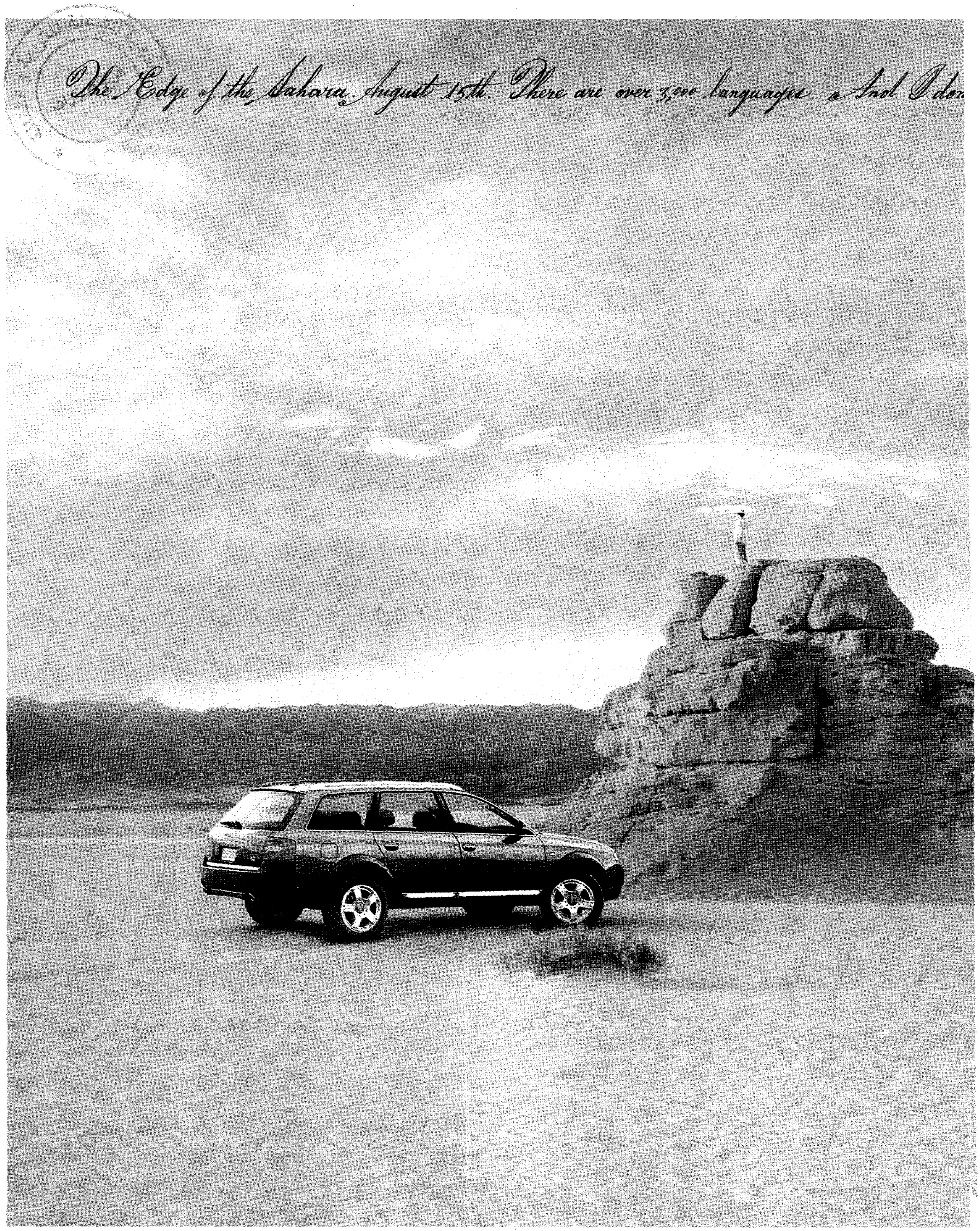
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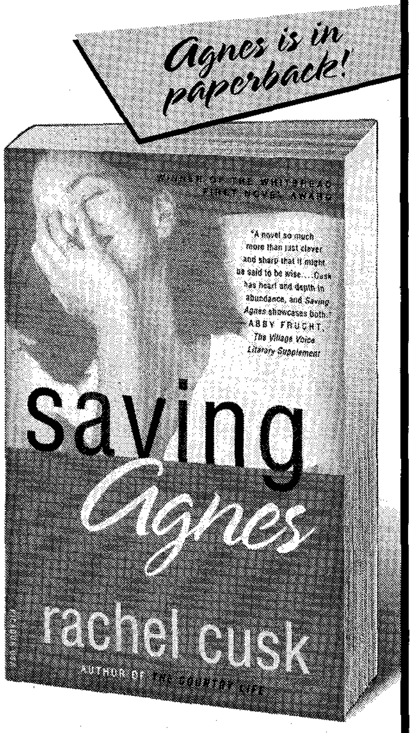
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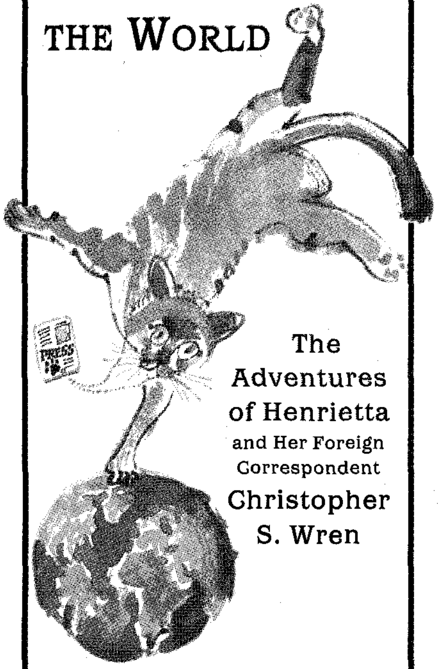

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Jeffrey Goldberg ("Arafat's Gift," p. 52) is a staff writer. His book on the Middle East will be published next year.

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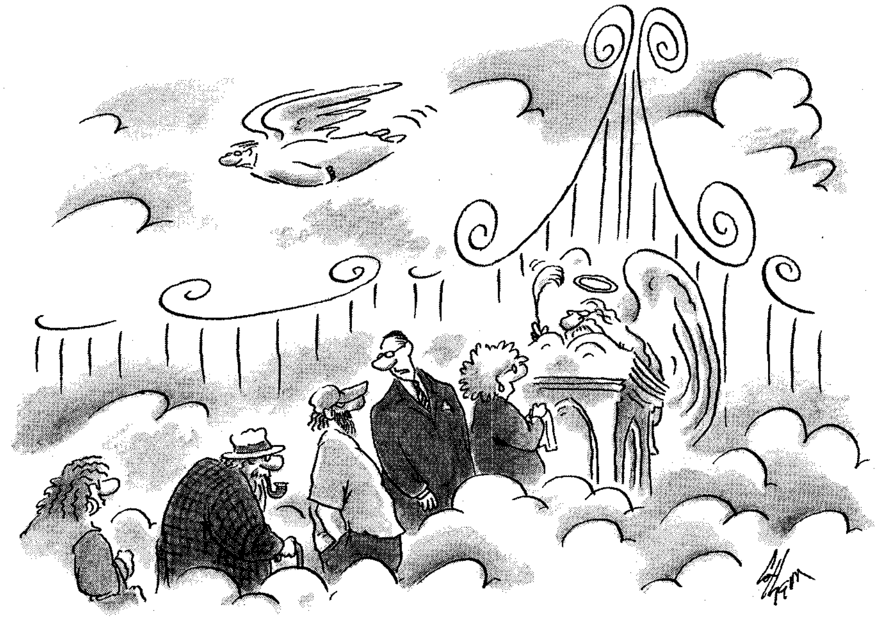
Hilton Als (A Critic at Large, p. 82) is collaborating with the photographer Darryl Turner on "Negro," a book of essays and photographs.

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 92) is the magazine's senior drama critic. His most recent book, "Show and Tell," is a collection of his *New Yorker* profiles. ♦



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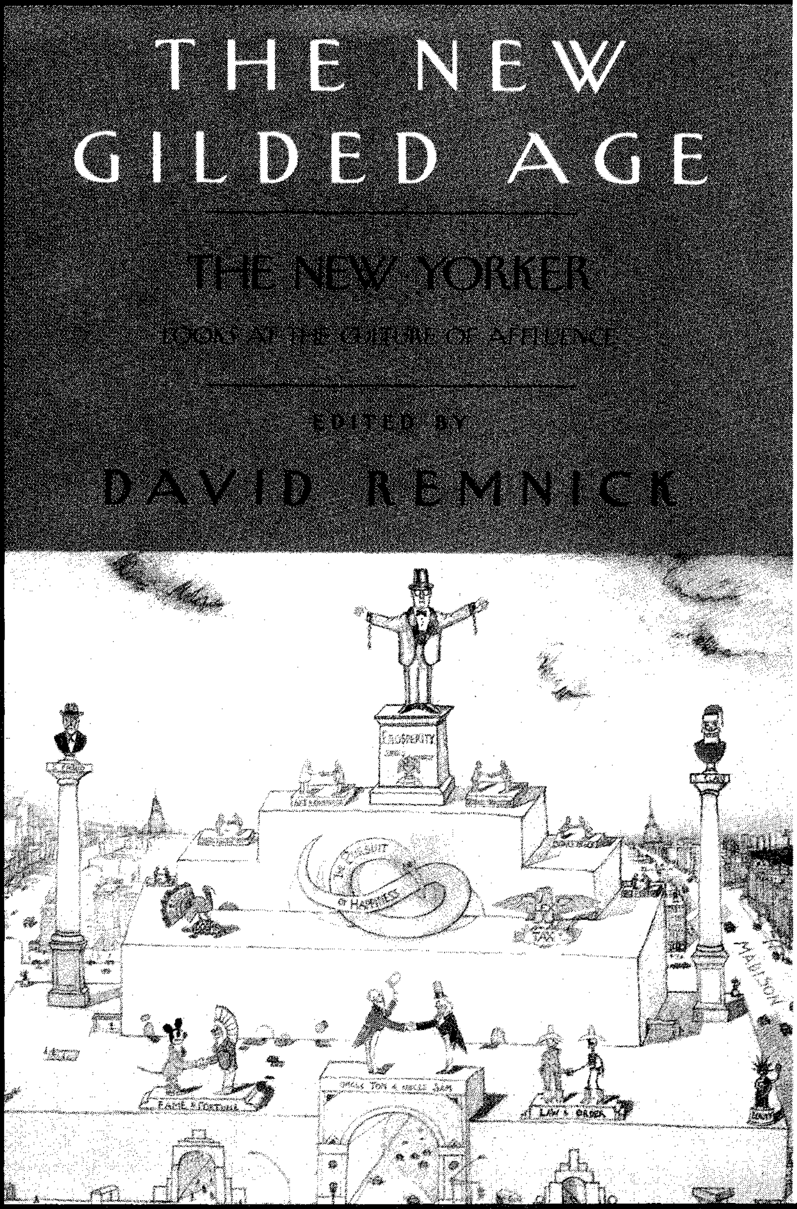
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THE ANGRY DUCKLING

Diana and Jeffrey Frank's compelling look at Hans Christian Andersen will, one hopes, help to rehabilitate the image of this complex and misunderstood artist (A Critic at Large, January 8th). As the Franks demonstrate, Andersen is much more than a teller of (often wretchedly mistranslated) fairy tales. Had he written his novels, travel books, plays, and poems in a "major" European language, instead of his native Danish, they might well have become part of the international literary canon. Yet a fuller appreciation of Andersen's art is somewhat obscured by the Franks' focus on the personal, autobiographical nature of his writings; Andersen the social critic continues to be overlooked. His tales and novels can rival Charles Dickens's in their adept condemnation, both explicit and implicit, of societal ills—something readers in English usually only glimpse in "The Little Match Girl" and other, better-travelled stories.

Frank Hugus
Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Mass.

BITTER PILLS

The story of Daphne Merkin's repeated hospitalizations for depression is also, sadly, a story about how in-patient psychiatric care has changed for the worse in the past few decades ("The Black Season," January 8th). As a psychiatrist, now retired, I was particularly struck by her fellow-patients at one hospital, who were sent home as cured the moment their insurance ran out. Managed care has created a destructive cycle in which mentally ill people are simply given a brief haven and a lot of drugs to keep them safe. Studies have shown that the best psychiatric care involves a combination of medication and meaningful therapy; without it, patients are just being set up for further crises. They are also getting the message, which may be dangerously inaccurate, that their illness is physical and can best be cured with a pill. Until hospitals find a more humane approach, we will not have progressed very far from the days of human warehousing and nineteenth-century asylums.

R. Peter Uhlmann, M.D.
Powell River, B.C.

WHAT BUSH CAN'T DO

Hendrik Hertzberg suggests that President-elect Bush should, because of questions about the election, give Democrats a role in making judicial appointments that "goes beyond the passive giving or withholding of consent" (The Talk of the Town, January 15th). For Democrats to disagree with Bush, oppose his nominees, and filibuster him in Congress is reasonable. But it is unreasonable to ask any leader to make himself dependent on people who will not support the platform he campaigned on. Voters on both sides have a right to a government that is not crippled by internal contradictions.

G. Kirk Raab
Portola Valley, Calif.

The intemperate attack by Hertzberg on what he now calls "the Supreme Court Five" is not a helpful contribution to public discourse. If the Justices' decision betrayed a political predisposition, then so did the decisions in Roe v. Wade and Brown v. Board of Education—each of which pronounced a constitutional principle and carried it to a politically extraordinary end. The villain here is not the Court but the failure of the State of Florida to narrow the margin of counting error by buying modern, accurate voting machines in all districts. Of course, there would be no villain if either party had presented a vision that appealed to a clear majority of the electorate.

F. Peter Phillips
Montclair, N.J.

•

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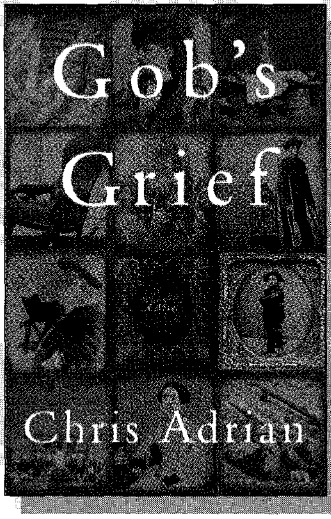

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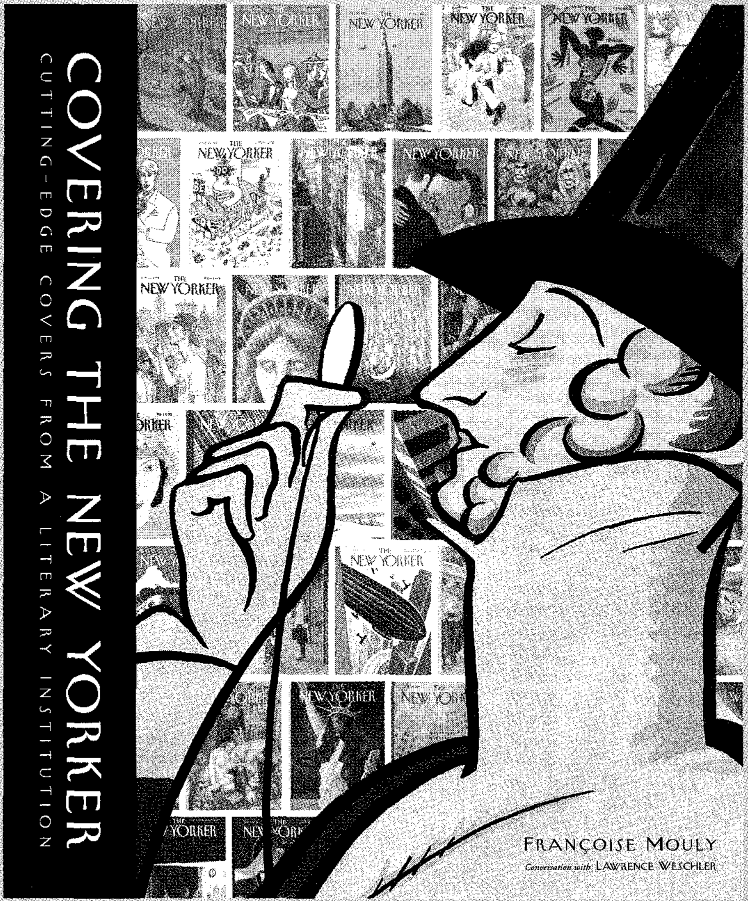
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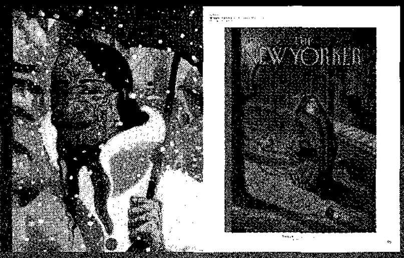

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CELLINI
Reg Rogers portrays the sixteenth-century Florentine sculptor, in a new play by John Patrick Shanley, who is also directing. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE
The Target Margin Theatre's production of Christopher Marlowe's rarely staged circa-1593 play, directed by David Herskovits. Preview on Jan. 24. Opens Jan. 25 at 8. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657.)

FORCE CONTINUUM
A drama about a rookie New York City cop which traces the careers of three generations of black policemen. Written by Kia Corthron. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR
The Irish actor Nial Buggy stars as Oscar Wilde, in Micheál MacLiammóir's one-man portrait of the playwright. Directed by Charlotte Moore. In previews through Jan. 27. Opens Jan. 28 at 7. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

KRISIT
Hollywood is the setting for Y York's comedy about plastic surgery, which stars Scotty Bloch and Larry Pine. In previews through Jan. 28. Opens Jan. 29 at 7. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

LITTLE MURDERS
Jules Feiffer's 1967 black comedy continues the inaugural season of City Center's Voices! series of readings, dedicated to rarely revived American plays. One performance only, Jan. 30 at 8. (131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES
From the Bat Theatre Company, a staging of O'Neill's 1917 play, set on the steamer Glencairn, anchored off the West Indies. Preview on Jan. 25. Opens Jan. 26 at 10. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY
Marian Seldes and Brian Murray portray a mysterious older couple who convince a pair of new parents that their baby was never born, in a new play by Edward Albee. David Esbjornson is the director. In previews. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA
The second installment in the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy (which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "The Lonesome West"), presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. Gordon Edelstein is the director. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
28	29	30	24	25	26	27

TIME AND AGAIN
Jack Finney's 1970 novel about a New Yorker who travels through time is the basis for a new musical by Walter Edgar Kennon (score) and Jack Viertel (book). Susan H. Schulman is the director. In previews through Jan. 28. Opens Jan. 30 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

UDU
The poet Sekou Sundiata and the jazz composer Craig Harris have teamed up for this music-theatre work about slavery in the past and the present. Jan. 26-27 at 8. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AMERICAN RHAPSODY
KT Sullivan and Mark Nadler star in a musical revue celebrating the works of George Gershwin. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

BETRAYAL
A revival of Harold Pinter's bleak 1978 comedy of manners, about the blithe treachery of adultery and the thousand little lies that can make and break a friendship. Juliette Binoche, inexplicably, stars as a publisher's wife who has had a long affair with her husband's best friend, a literary agent. Binoche can do happy, she can do sad, but she brings no definition, no specificity, to her role. Liev Schreiber, as her lover, and John Slattery, as her husband, do better with their parts—particularly Slattery, who combines emotional nakedness with reserve to portray the terribly comic aspects of trauma. Draggily directed by David Leveaux. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/27/00.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-9393. Closes Feb. 4.)

CARY AND GALLO: WHAT IF WE DID THIS?
The comedy duo of Josh Cary and Patrick Gallo present live sketch comedy and five short comic films, in which they star. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 12.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Chekhov's last play. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

COBB
In his brilliantly constructed drama about baseball's greatest hitter and most brutal bully, the playwright Lee Blessing places three actors onstage together to portray Tyrus Raymond Cobb; they reminisce from the afterlife and interact with each other at various stages in Cobb's professional and personal career, during which he sheepishly dodged social injustices and thereby denied himself a chance at true greatness. (Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

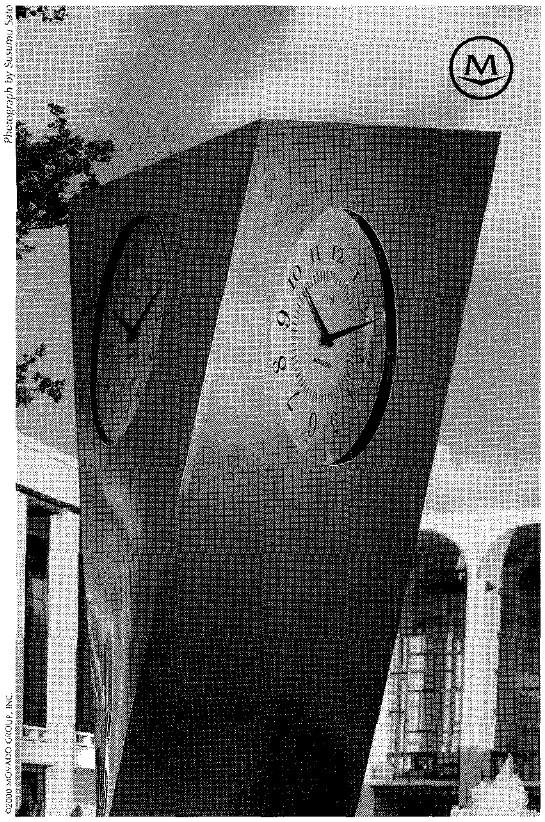
THE DINNER PARTY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, and his six characters—three divorced couples—are not the usual Simon-Americans of his "Suite" plays. They are French, or are meant to be. Still, the play is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. (11/6/00) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

END OF THE WORLD PARTY
A comedy by Chuck Ranberg, about a group of men who rent a Fire Island house together each year. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

FIDDLER SUB-TERRAIN
In this updated version of "Fiddler on the Roof," written by Oren Safdie (book) and Ronnie Cohen (music and lyrics), Tevye is the head of a middle-class Jewish family facing bankruptcy. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes Jan. 28.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
These days, ridiculing Broadway is like shooting fish in a barrel, so it's amazing that the latest version of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running satirical revue manages to fire off as many good ones as it does. Alessandrini can always be counted on for a smart laugh, but not all of the numbers here are up to his usual high standards of comic cruelty; it's partly because the ensemble as a whole is not as adept at impersonations as casts of the past, and partly because none of the new crop of Broadway stars are large enough to lend themselves to caricature. Thank goodness the wonderful Christine Pedi is still in the show; her loopy, loving imitations of yesteryear's biggies—Elaine Stritch, Liza Minnelli, Ethel Merman, and Barbra Streisand—are more than worth the trip and the price of a ticket. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA
This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy. But the talented cast sends up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes and delivers the remaining material—dance songs,



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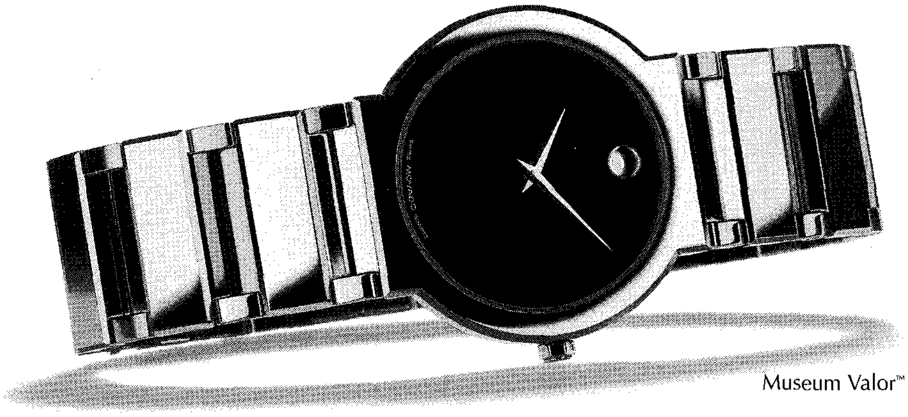

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

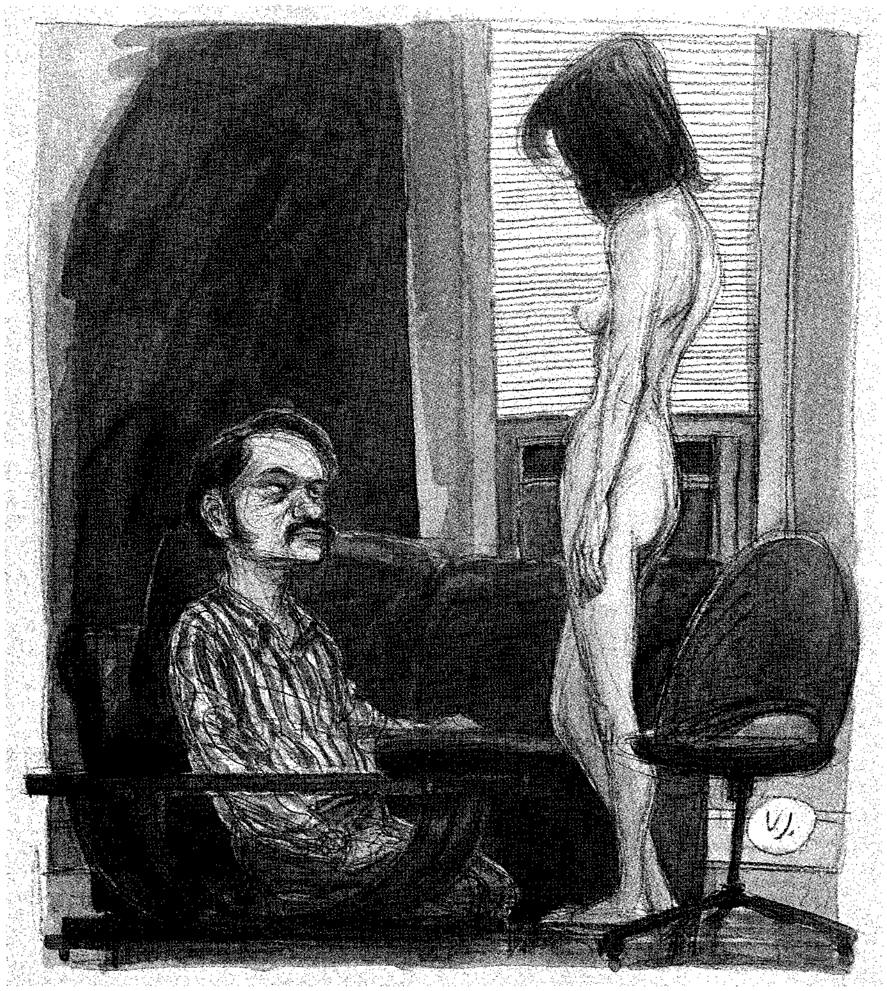
songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY

The musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to earn some cash by stripping, has all the spirit and charm of the original but, as befits a Broadway production, on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. Early on, Terrence McNally's book and David Yazbek's songs strike notes of class consciousness and unemployment-related low male self-esteem a little too hard, but soon enough the show's winning good humor and inventiveness kick in, and if you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men prancing around in red G-strings. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

HOWIE THE ROOKIE

Two feckless working-class roughnecks are the only characters who take the stage in the Irish playwright Mark O'Rowe's play, set in the seamy streets and pubs of Dublin. In spite of the fact that they tell their fatally intertwined tales one after the other, without ever interacting, they create a sadder and more shocking atmosphere of contemporary urban decay than most traditional plays ever do. Its richness is due partly to O'Rowe's evocative language and skills as a storyteller, and partly to the talents of Aidan Kelly and Karl Shiels (the original cast of the Bush Theatre production), who seduce your imagination into working overtime to conjure a world as dark, bawdy, and bloody—and, at times, as poetic—as Shakespeare's. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Jan. 27.)



"More Lies About Jerzy," by Davey Holmes, at the Vineyard Theatre.

AN IDIOT DIVINE

A music-theatre piece written and performed by Rinde Eckert ("And God Created Great Whales"). Directed by Ellen McLaughlin. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

JANE EYRE

It's a dicey—and perhaps an unnecessary—business to musicalize a novel that provides its own rich, lingering strains. There is heart here; for soul you'll have to read the novel. The show is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. Though the show's book is a fair job, the music is schmaltzy, and the modern stage devices—the endless projections of trees and sky may make you feel like you're watching the Weather Channel—don't quite bring Brontë to life. The appealing cast is led by Marla Schaffel, who is the very picture of the Jane Eyre in your mind's eye, and James Barbour, who is a bit less imposing a Mr. Rochester than is wanted but has a satisfying baritone. And three cheers for Mary Stout, as the flappable old housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax. With a book by John Caird and a score by Paul Gordon. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

KILLERS AND OTHER FAMILY

Rattlestick Productions presents a play by Lucy Thurber, about a woman whose past catches up with her. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 206-1515.)

THE LAST OF THE THORNTONS

Horton Foote's new drama stars Hallie Foote, his daughter, as Alberta Thornton, the last living member of a powerful small-town Texas clan. Alberta's mental faculties are decaying at a nursing home; in the dayroom, the aging patients and their visitors (including Estelle Parsons) reminisce about family members we never get to meet. It's not a setup that makes for action or character development; the resulting experience is at times depressing and befuddling, but never really moving or poignant. (Signature Theatre Company, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529. Closes Jan. 28.)

LIVING IN THE WIND

Sally Stewart-Coleman and David Damane portray married ex-slaves trying to rebuild their lives after the Civil War, in a romantic drama by Michael Bradford. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

LYPSINKA! THE BOXED SET

The star (a.k.a. John Epperson) makes her first concert appearance in seven years. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 28.)

MOMMA

In her one-woman show, Siobhan Fallon portrays a bus driver from rural New York who travels to Manhattan to visit a fertility herbalist. Jan. 28-29 at 8. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

MORE LIES ABOUT JERZY

Jared Harris stars in a drama about the life of Jerzy Kosinski, written by Davey Holmes and directed by Darko Tresnjak. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes Feb. 11.)

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD, MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY

Richard Foreman's forty-eighth play, in which two ex-radicals (Tony Torn and Jay Smith) look for meaning in the new millennium. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

PARADISE ISLAND

From the New Group, a play by Benjie Aerenson, in which a mother and daughter (Lynn Cohen and Adrienne Shelly) spend twenty-four hours together, gambling in the Bahamas. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

PETE 'N' KEELY

A pair of singing stars, formerly a married duo, are reunited on a television variety show in 1968, in a musical comedy by James Hindman. With sets by Ray Klausen and costumes by Bob Mackie. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

PROOF

The young playwright David Auburn's play stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant University of Chicago mathematician, whose life and career began to fall away when he became mentally ill. Parker's character appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles, and Parker skillfully and believably delivers the smart and sullen, insolent and indolent goods. Auburn has taken on some biggies here: what the link may be between genius and mental instability, why it is that lives get stuck, and how elusive the truth of the matter—any matter—can be. For all that, you wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved; but its level of accomplishment and the realness of its characters show that Auburn has real depth and a real voice. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RESIDENT ALIEN

Bette Bourne portrays Quentin Crisp in Tim Fountain's play about the life and work of the late East Village writer. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. The only air of self-parody comes from the impish Dick Cavett; as the narrator, he gives the show a shot of vitality with his improvised standup shtick and, if you're lucky, his version of the Moonwalk. The rest of the casting is inspired (although Lea DeLaria and Joan Jett are sadly underused), but the performers can't really compete with their celluloid counterparts. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

SANDRA BERNHARD

The comedienne, cultural commentator, and singer presents her latest one-woman show, "The Love Machine," backed by a five-piece combo. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 4.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE

Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by

VICTOR JUHASZ

her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SEUSSICAL
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. The music and lyrics are generic, the costumes are unimaginative, the choreography and direction are winded. With the exception of one gentle and winning performance—by Kevin Chamberlin as Horton the Elephant, who gets conned into hatching an egg—it's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

SHAKESPEARE'S VILLAINS: A MASTERCLASS IN EVIL
In his one-man show, Steven Berkoff discusses and performs various villain roles from the Shakespearean canon, including Iago, Shylock, and even Hamlet. Berkoff's long-winded digressions—and there are many—are more distracting than entertaining, and his need to inject humor everywhere is frustrating. Nevertheless, Berkoff's transformations are extraordinarily nimble, particularly his Richard III and his Macbeth, and his insightful analysis of performance technique and text celebrate both the wonders of Shakespeare and the wonders of theatregoing itself. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 28.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa, which begins in 1965 and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, has moved to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynne Meadow is the director. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

TAMICANFLY
A blind gambler risks his life savings on a long-shot horse, in a drama by Scott Marshall Taylor. Ethan McSweeny is the director. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

THEATRE OF LIGHT
Lights, paintings, movement, and music from Rudi Stern, the "light artist," whose designs in the nineteen-sixties accompanied Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Celebrations and concerts by the Doors. (Flamboyan Theatre, Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 279-4200.)

THE UNEXPECTED MAN
In this small gem by Yasmina Reza, Alan Bates and the magnificent Eileen Atkins share a compartment on a Paris-to-Frankfurt train. He is a writer, and she, unbeknownst to him, is his ideal reader; Reza's artfulness in presenting their private reflections—his discontent, her insightful analysis of his books and rueful reminiscences of friendships—make this a very grownup play about separateness and connection, about the art of life. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (11/6/00) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 28.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Jan. 24 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Slonimsky's Earbox," and "La Valse." ♦ Jan. 25 at 8: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Kammermusik No. 2," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Organon." ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Duo Concertant," "Episodes," and "La Valse." ♦ Jan. 27 at 2: "Episodes," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Slonimsky's Earbox," and "Fanfare." ♦ Jan. 27 at 8: "Fanfare," "Duo Concertant," "Kammermusik No. 2," and "Organon." ♦ Jan. 28 at 3: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Allegro Brillante," "Romeo and Juliet," and "Organon." ♦ Jan. 30 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Davidsbündlertänze," and "Fanfare." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Through Feb. 25.)

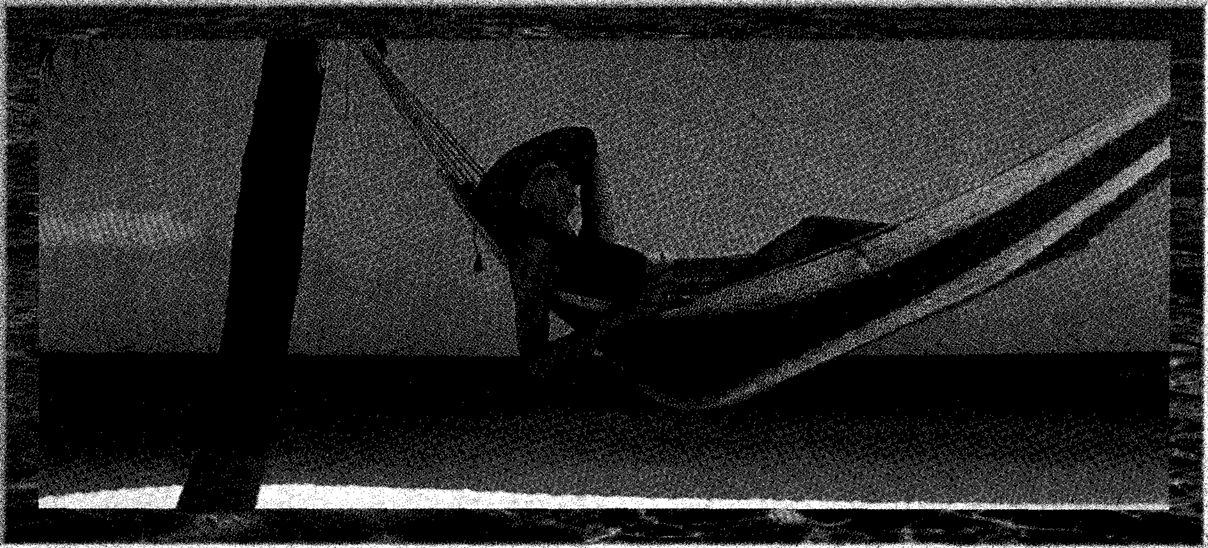
"ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT"
The annual festival of contemporary dance. **Black Tie Optional Hultman & Friends:** Jan. 24 at 7, Jan. 27 at 8, and Jan. 28 at 2. ♦ **Wally Cardona Quartet:** Jan. 25 at 8. ♦ **Armitage Gone! Dance:** Jan. 26 at 8 and Jan. 27 at 2. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

"FOOD FOR THOUGHT"
Heidi Latsky, Wendy Perron, and Susan Osberg present a smorgasbord of dance works by other choreographers. Each has curated an evening that offers four to seven separate works by as many companies; dancegoers who bring at least two items of canned food (destined for neighborhood charities) get in for half price. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 26-28 at 8:30.)

BILL YOUNG & DANCERS
The barefoot choreographer offers two programs, each matching a première with repertory work. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 24-27 at 8.)

"ZERO TOLERANCE"
The choreographer Niles Ford offers three related pieces ("Endangered Species," "Glass Ceiling," and "Search & Seizure") about ways to deal with government prohibitions. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Jan. 25-28 at 8:30.)

"FARRUQUITO Y FAMILIA"
The late flamenco legend El Farruco danced slowly, with deliberate pride. When he raised up



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his arms in the mournful *soleá*, it was as if he'd lifted a veil: he'd blink, look down, and then explode into a fury of intricate footwork. He died in 1997 (not long after he was caught on film for Carlos Saura's "Flamenco"), but he passed on his minimalist style, if not quite his supreme assurance, to his eighteen-year-old grandson, Farruquito. The young dancer will be joined by his mother (Farruco's daughter), father, aunt, twelve-year-old brother, and ten-year-old cousin for this New York début. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Jan. 27 at 8.)

GLEICH DANCES CONTEMPORARY BALLET
Three works by Julia K. Gleich: "Candle Dances," set to a viola solo composed by Alan Terricciano, "Sibelius Suite," and a duet, "Ghost." (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. Jan. 25-27 at 8.)

CAROLYN LORD AND DANCERS
The six-member company presents a suite of ballet studies, set to contemporary compositions for violin by Iannis Xenakis, Bela Bartók, Janet Maguire, and Elliott Carter, to be played by Theresa Salomon and Monica Bauchwitz. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-7882. Jan. 27-28 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

ALESSANDRA BELLONI
Belloni is a Neapolitan singer, musical healer, and tambourine designer. That may sound like an odd combination, but, according to Belloni, tambourines are many millennia old and in southern Italy were primarily played by women, often in ceremonies designed to cure a malady brought on by a tarantula bite. In performance, Belloni resurrects the high-speed rhythm known as the tarantella, along with other healthily percussive songs. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Jan. 26 at 8.)

STEVE EARLE
After teaming up with the bluegrass legend Del McCoury and his band for "The Mountain," a collection of songs that, only about three years after their release, already seem as though they are old-time classics, the country-rock rebel plugged his guitar back in for last year's "Transcendental Blues." With his younger sister **Stacey Earle,** whose songs are simple and stripped down on the surface, but rich at heart. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Jan. 27 at 8.)

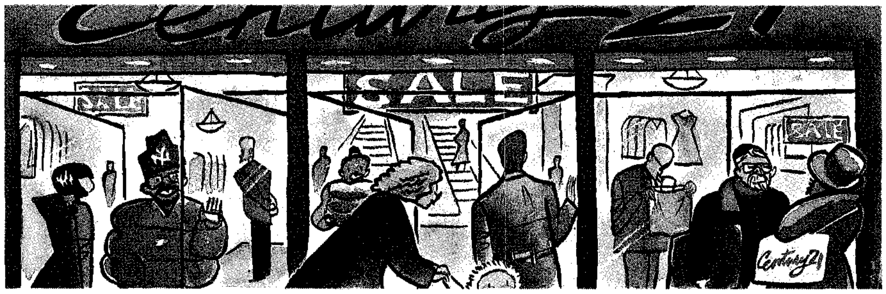
CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Jan. 25-28: One of the greatest soul and blues singers, **Bobby (Blue) Bland** is almost always on tour, usually opening for his friend B. B. King. Here he'll have a chance to settle in and enjoy displaying his signature growl—a rumbling call that sounds to the uninitiated like someone clearing his throat but has the unequivocal effect of driving the ladies crazy.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Jan. 25: For most of the nineties, **Stephen Malkmus** fronted Pavement, perhaps the ultimate indie-rock band; their abstruse lyrics, brilliantly messy guitar-based sound, and ability to communicate whimsy, melancholy, and multiple levels of irony (usually within the same song) endeared them to the hearts of college students everywhere. Last year, Pavement disbanded after five albums, and Malkmus promptly announced plans for a solo record. The results don't stray too far from home, with songs full of fractured wordplay that are either about everything or nothing. Jan. 26: The Brooklyn ensemble **Les Sans Culottes** play raunchy faux-French rock and roll that's both a sendup of and a tribute to the

ON AND OFF THE AVENUE
Century 21 in the Twenty-first Century



Snow may have recently chased the vendors from their spots at the World Trade Center plaza just across the street, but inside **CENTURY 21** department store (22 Cortlandt St.; 227-9092), shoppers were lined up three deep at the handbag counter, exhorting the dead-on-her-feet saleswoman to hand over the spoils: last summer's petal-pink Prada knapsacks, orange-and-olive fur Moschino totes, Fendi baguettes made of what looked like horsehair worked in an Art Moderne pattern that would have suited Zuleika Dobson. Though at $540 the Fendi was about half its uptown price, it was still fully $525 more than a similar handbag displayed barely three feet away, a perfectly serviceable replica by XOXO, rendered in beaded fake fur.

Century 21 is by far the city's most ambitious discounter. Everything about the place conspires to knock high fashion off its pedestal: not just the proximity of pretenders to their haute-couture counterparts, but the flat lighting, the stuffed racks, and the slushy music interrupted every few minutes with plaintive announcements: "An associate from ladies' denim, come to the lingerie complex!" Certainly, the city boasts other cut-rate houses—Loehmann's, Daffy's—but they tend to cling to a middlebrow sensibility, burying their scant designer offerings under an avalanche of car coats and bathrobes. Not so Century 21, where the goods are so high-flying that Richard Martin, the late curator of the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute, was known to cruise the aisles and pick up a Galliano gown or two for the museum's collection.

Here, floors full of merchandise once destined for boutiques on the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré and Corso Como have ended up—through closeouts, overproduction, and the unwise decisions of buyers—with slashed prices and a faintly humiliated air. Almost no designer, no matter how rarefied, escapes the store's unlovely shelves: smack in the middle of the cacophonous shoe department there are tables piled high with smashed boxes that contain, among other footwear that failed to find a broader audience, pairs of patent-leather, spike-heeled Dolce & Gabbana sandals that tie around the ankles with chain mail. In the men's section, Helmut Lang's much vaunted splattered dungarees, carefully stained to give the impression of having been lately removed from a West Virginia miner's cabin, were recently marked $49.97, about the same price as a pair of pristine, if prosaic, Levi's. Down in the basement, duvets worthy of a four-poster at the Danieli repose just outside the corridor leading to the barred windows of the "loss prevention" office.

It used to be impossible to try on anything but a jacket or a pair of shoes at Century 21, but the store finally relented, installing a warren of doorless stalls in the women's European-designer-clothing department. Though leftover fall merchandise swings freely from crammed T-stands, more recent arrivals are wired to the racks via contraptions that require the ministrations of a hard-to-find salesclerk. But once such a person is induced to unhook a wafer-thin Jean-Paul Gaultier slip dress ($200), a white leather Chinese-dragon-festooned Alexander McQueen skirt ($400), or a Pucci midriff top printed with "Emilio"s as subtle as Hirschfeld "Nina"s ($180), the garments can now be taken to fitting rooms, where the other half-dressed inhabitants offer appraisals as cool and unblinking as the expressions on front-row fashionistas in Paris or Milan.

—*Lynn Yaeger*

MARCELLUS HALL

dark tunes of late-period Serge Gainsbourg and punchy *yé-yé* girl pop. They put on a very silly show, going so far as to perform in frilly underthings. Jan. 28-29: With his Cubist cheekbones and suitably Dionysian mane, **Richard Ashcroft** could have easily been the biggest English rock star in America since Mick Jagger. As the lead singer for the Verve, Ashcroft was a prefab golden god whose flair for eccentric behavior earned him the nickname Mad Richard at home and a moderate amount of fame worldwide, thanks in large part to the epic single "Bittersweet Symphony" (which sampled an orchestral rendition of the Rolling Stones' "The Last Time"). But, unlike Jagger, Ashcroft took his potential as a solo artist seriously and broke up the band before it could really dig in. With his latest release, "Alone with Everybody," he has turned in a shamanic, neo-psychedelic opus that suggests that the Verve brought out only a fraction of his talent.

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.
73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Jan. 26: **Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen** warm up the hot-rod Lincoln. Jan. 27: The sharp, scratchy guitar of the veteran **Hubert Sumlin,** who played in Howlin' Wolf's band for twenty years.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Jan. 27: The trademark jerky little pop songs and surreal humor of **They Might Be Giants.** The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 25: The appealing cinematic excursions of **Skyrocket,** an energetic ensemble that combines everything from psychedelic guitars to romantic New Wave hooks. With **Spottiswoode & His Enemies.** Spottiswoode, the backbone of the tight sextet that bears his name, writes astringently morose ballads about love, and his deep, rough-hewn voice will make you think of Leonard Cohen.

SHINE
285 West Broadway, at Canal St. (941-0900)—Jan. 25: **Kelly Joe Phelps.**

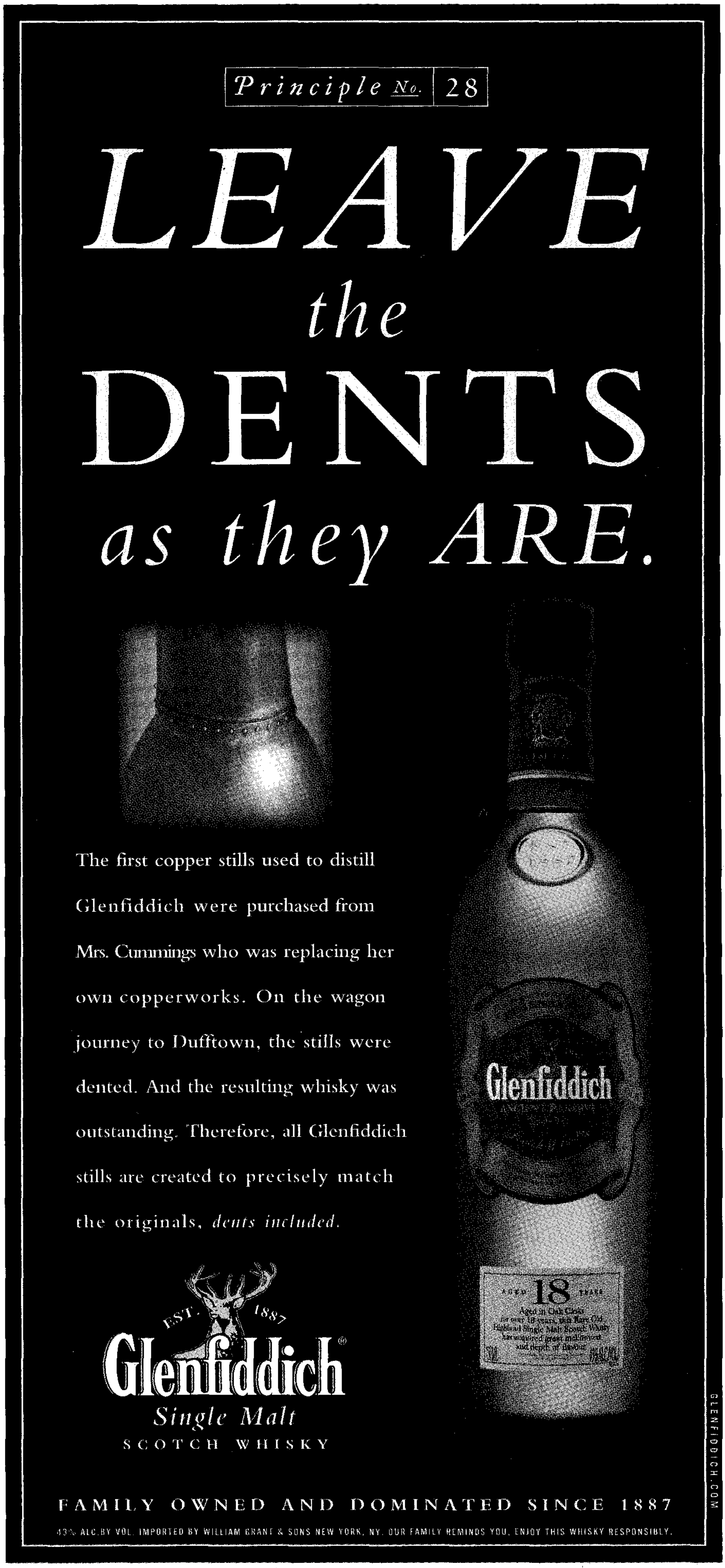
VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Jan. 26-27: The dreamy New York City quartet **Luna.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Jan. 25-27: There can never be too many tributes to Booker Little, a tragic genius who died of uremia in 1961 at the age of twenty-three. He was a daring modernist whose dissonance-tinged trumpet work and writing pointed toward musical directions that have still not been thoroughly explored. A host of fine post-bop trumpeters—**Randy Brecker, Brian Lynch, Claudio Roditi,** and **David Weiss**—join a rhythm section that includes two Little associates (the pianist **Don Friedman** and the drummer **Pete "La Roca" Sims**) to play compositions from Little's 1961 masterpiece "Out Front." Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Jan. 28: The Argentinean tenor saxophonist **Gato Barbieri** has a sensuous tone and a résumé that includes everything from avant-garde work in the sixties to composing the score for "Last Tango in Paris."

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through Feb. 17, **Mary Cleere Haran,** who has long been the witty apotheosis of cabaret singers. Her voice, with its slight, curling vibrato, suggests Doris Day, and her elegant nose, lean, waving arms, and swan neck recall Loretta Young. But in this show, she displays a surprising side—that of a Broadway singer who can belt out a melody and act (she puts on a funny Brooklyn accent for Rodgers and Hart's "The Girl Friend" and a rodeo twang for their "Way Out West").



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Then she quiets down and talks about the nuns who raised her and how "lyrics are little windows into the souls of the people who write them," before melting the room with a slow humming duet of "The Lullaby of Broadway" with Richard Rodney Bennett, her accompanist. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, the pianist **Peter Mintun** is in attendance.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 28: The **Donald Byrd** sextet. From serious hard-bopper in the fifties and sixties to funked-up fusioner in the seventies to rejuvenated post-bopper in the nineties, the trumpeter Byrd has been there and back. This is a chance to hear if he's any worse for the wear after such a long, strange trip. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Jan. 28: **Mulgrew Miller** is a product of Memphis, a town whose jazz pianists invariably fall under the looming shadow of the florid legend Phineas Newborn. Miller, who tested his mettle with Art Blakey in the eighties, can be loquacious, but his orations have eloquence and verve. He's discovering an inspiring musical voice with his Wingspan ensemble, which features the drummer **Kareem Riggins** and the saxophonist **Antonio Hart.** Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 26-27: The Boston saxophonist **George Garzone,** a respected teacher and daredevil improviser, is putting in more frequent appearances here, and New Yorkers should be thankful. With his longtime trio, the Fringe (celebrating its thirtieth anniversary as a working ensemble), intuiting his every labyrinthine move, Garzone slips in and out of conventional forms like a jazz Houdini.

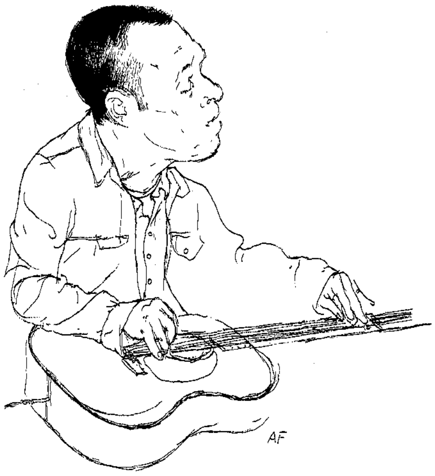
MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—Jan. 25: The singer **Nora York's** clever conflations of iconic pop, jazz, gospel, and what-have-you are ingenious, but her affecting originals are what truly expose the quirky strength of this extravagant talent.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The guitarist **Kurt Rosenwinkle** (here with his quartet through Jan. 28) has found a jazz soul mate in the exceptional tenor saxophonist **Mark Turner.** In sync they may be, but Rosenwinkle and Turner haven't worked out a musical conception that shows either to the best advantage—plodding fusion ploys negate the lyric qualities of both players. To their credit, though, they are seeking a route out of the thicket of post-bop clichés that hinder the work of many of their contemporaries. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ZINC BAR
90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—Jan. 30-31: The **Wil Calhoun** quartet. Life has gotten jazzier for the drummer Calhoun since he left the rock band Living Colour. The thrill of being able to hear himself while he plays may make up for having left behind the ephemeral pleasures of his youth, like, say, opening for the Rolling Stones.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes."** Anyone suffering from reindeer withdrawal need look no further than this dazzling cache of loot, unearthed just fifteen years ago from a field of ancient burial mounds on Russia's southern steppes. A photomural of reindeer grazing the Siberian plain sets the stage for a phalanx of fifteen stags from the fifth century B.C. who are the undisputed stars of the extensive show (a reprise of sorts of the museum's crowd-pleasing "Land of the Scythians," from 1975). Carved from wood and covered with sheets of gold or silver, each stag is nearly two feet tall, with curlicue antlers that spiral majestically, almost ridiculously, heavenward. Elsewhere a tiny stag, a marvel of cedar with intricate leather antlers, dances solo on the head of an iron pin. Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"The Still-Lifes of Evaristo Baschenis: The Music of Silence."** Through March 4. ♦ **"Rain of the Moon: Silver in Ancient Peru."** Through April 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)


ANDY FRIEDMAN

WEB OF SOUND *In concert, the slide-guitarist Kelly Joe Phelps lays his instrument on his lap and works his fingers with the finesse and speed of Arachne. He twists his body, almost tangling himself up, and stomps his foot in heavy, irregular beats, physically echoing the music's mystical tones. Phelps appears this week at Shine, and its intimate quarters are an ideal setting for him to perform selections from his most recent release, "Shine Eyed Mister Zen." It features many of his own compositions, along with traditional folk standards; "Goodnight Irene," in particular, has become something of a showstopper.*

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Open Ends,"** a multiplex array of thematic mini-shows addressing art since 1960, continues, in some galleries, through Jan. 30. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The latest collaboration between the impishness of Frank Gehry and the grandiosity of Thomas Krens is on view in the form of a proposal for a new Guggenheim museum, a sort of Bilbao 2, to be built just below the South Street Seaport, in Manhattan. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A retrospective devoted to the work of Sol LeWitt, the Tom Sawyerish Conceptualist who gets assistants to execute his ideas, includes a zigguratlike sculpture, wall paintings, books, works on paper, and photographs. Through Feb. 25. ♦ A retrospective

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of the photographs of Edward Steichen. Through Feb. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays 1 to 9.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
583 Broadway (219-1222)—For several years now, Altoids has been sending cool-hunters, including New Museum staff, shopping for "curiously strong" contemporary art for its collection, which the mint company is donating to the museum. This is a big step for the New Museum (in art circles, "new" may soon sound as outdated as "modern"), and it brings up questions about archival storage, but the collection itself is, yes, both strong and curious. Patrick Miceli's assortment of fast-food drink cups on the floor at the entrance warns that this kind of work still has teeth; other pieces, such as Cohen, Frank, and Ippolito's diagrams of personalities and conversations, D'Nell Larson's down-covered, pedal-powered swan bumper cars, Reanne Estrada's hair-on-soap drawings, Virgil Marti's fluorescent "Bully Wallpaper," and a video of dancing cleavage, by Susan Smith-Pinelo, shows that contemporary art can still be fun, too. Through Jan. 28. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

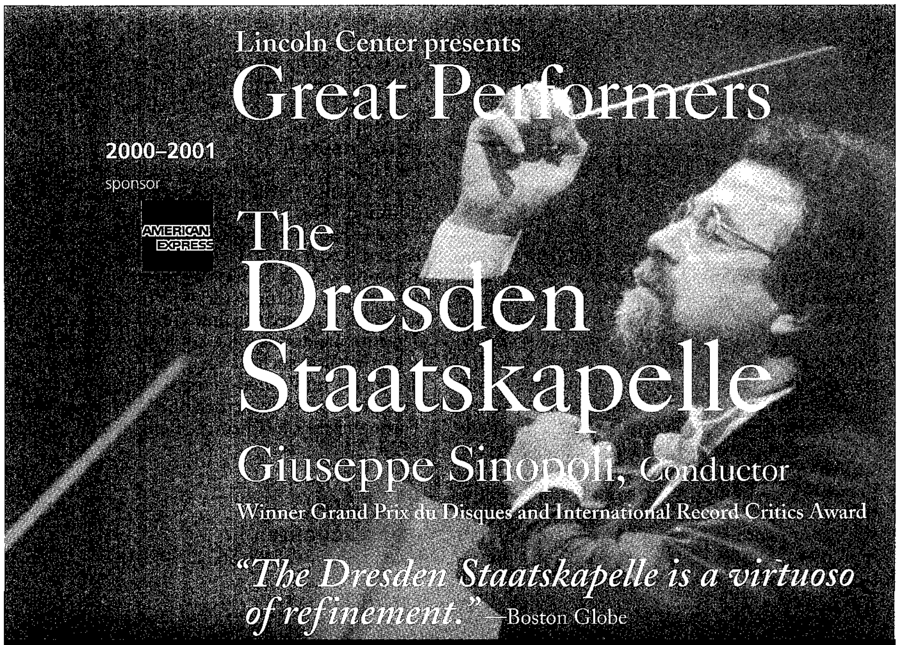
EMILY EVELETH
The artist who spent five years making heroic portraits of doughnuts now turns to the human figure. Like their predecessors, Eveleth's new subjects—mostly solitary men, their faces averted—are shown close up, in black spaces, under hot theatrical lights. The lighting, combined with a slight blurring effect, gives these images the look of photography: they could almost be slowed-down versions of Bill Viola videos. As in Viola's work, it's clear that something very solemn is going on. Eveleth, however, is too coy to reveal exactly what that is. Through Feb. 10. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.)

"PERSONAL ABSTRACTIONS"
This lopsided three-person show emphasizes nontraditional materials and an approach that the critic and artist Lucy Lippard once termed "eccentric abstraction." Work from the early sixties by éminence grise Lee Bontecou is paired with recent sculpture by the West Coast artist Gay Outlaw. Unfortunately, Outlaw's spectacular "Black Hose Mountain," a ten-foot-tall facsimile of Mont Blanc fashioned from dishwasher hoses filled with plaster, inadvertently bullies Bontecou into submission; a pair of her otherwise muscular metal-and-canvas reliefs look anemic in its shadow. In the back gallery, Diana Cooper's latest diagrammatic drawing-as-sculpture, an intricate network of azure and turquoise, fares better for being on its own. Through Feb. 24. (Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. 879-3500.)

"THREE PAINTERS"
The landscapes in this fine show are illusory and miragelike. At first glance, Cameron Martin's monochrome canvases are the most literally scenic—luminous rockscapes so moody that Caspar David Friedrich's would appear almost giddy by comparison. But gaze long enough and Martin's craggy terrain turns fluid. Eva Lunsager's ecstatic paintings introduce themselves as sheer abstraction but soon lay claim to imaginary landscapes, as spumes of violet paint embellished with tiny orange dots become an underwater fireworks display. Louise Belcourt's sly compositions of grassy tufts and floating boulders feature an occasional tongue shape—a Gustonish serpent slithering into Eden. Through Feb. 10. (Lawrence Rubin Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.)

Short List

VITO ACCONCI AND ANA MENDIETA
Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through March 3.



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ALL BEETHOVEN
Friday, January 26
Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93
Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92
Pre-concert lecture in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse at 7:00 by Christopher H. Gibbs
8:00 Avery Fisher Hall
Tickets: $50/40/28

ALL MAHLER
Sunday, January 28
Symphony No. 6 in A minor
Pre-concert lecture in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse at 2:00 by Christopher H. Gibbs
3:00 Avery Fisher Hall
Tickets: $50/40/28

Photo: Tanja Niemann

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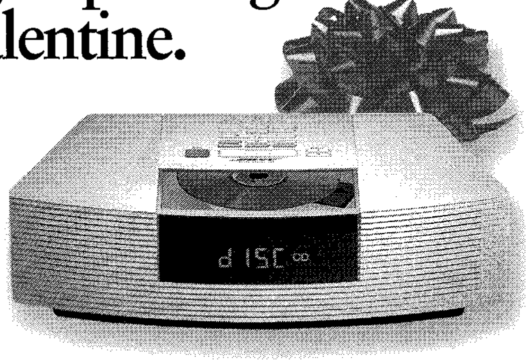

ANTHONY CARO
Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.
Through Feb. 9.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

LEONARDO DREW
If Richard Serra is the man of steel, Drew is the man of rust. In the past, his dourly elegant wall sculptures have been nearly monochromatic, their intricate surfaces covered with staining layers of brownish oxide. Here, however, he inches toward color, especially in the show's centerpiece, a fifty-six-foot-long installation first shown at the Hirshhorn Museum last March. A massive visual encyclopedia of detritus, it is ornamented with gaudy fragments of electrical wire, flip-flops, hair dryers, stuffed animals, and birds' wings. Close up, the junk brings on moments of sentimental recognition; from afar, the piece has something of the sombre presence of Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial—it's a cross between a mural and a dumpster. Through Feb. 10. (Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 752-2929.)

ROBERT LONGO
This latest rapturous downer of a Longo show presents fifteen big charcoal drawings from photographs that were taken in 1938 at 19 Bergstrasse, Sigmund Freud's famous digs in Vienna. As usual with this artist, whose "Men in Cities" images of dancing or dying figures were logos of early-eighties chic, it's hard to say whether pretension or cynicism is the dominant note. He assumes the sucker appeal of a fetishized subject. When is a couch only a couch? Through March 3. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.)

DONA NELSON
Like a latter-day jazz master, the veteran abstract painter Nelson exuberantly advances a recherché tradition. The tall canvases in this show, titled "Twelve Stations of the Subway" in sassy tribute to Barnett Newman's "Stations of the Cross," suggest a neo-New York School Wynton Marsalis. They play rioting textures (drawn, brushed, poured, stenciled, screened) against coolly rhythmic, gridded formats and laconic color schemes. Hints of urban reality, such as skyscraper windows and those old mullioned-glass skylights built into the SoHo sidewalks, come and go. Nelson wails. Through Feb. 24. (Cheim & Reid, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List

AZIZ + CUCHER
Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.
Through Feb. 24.

KAREN KILIMNIK
303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-0024.
Through Feb. 10.

DAVID SALLE
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through March 3.

LISA YUSKAVAGE
Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9889.
Through Feb. 3.

Nino Migliori's occasionally surreal views of postwar Italy, at de Lellis (see Photography).

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

BIRDIE LUSCH
This self-taught artist with a name like a drag queen (she earned her nickname feeding birds) and a pet rooster named Prince lived by the motto "Aspire to inspire, ere you expire." Born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1903, Lusch was college educated but opted to work the line in a factory, devoting her spare time to rock collecting (some examples are incorporated into her art) and customizing everything in sight (Schwitter's Merzbau by way of a Depression-era pack rat). Her eclectic work ranges from a red-white-and-blue cutlery rack to a crocodile made of bathroom tiles. But the show's undisputed star is a suite of floral still-life collages—ikebana meets Marimekko—each signed with a sketch of a little bird. Through Feb. 9. (K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 219-9918.)

MARCO MAGGI
Armed with pencil, paper, and a roll of Reynolds Wrap, this young Uruguayan artist makes meticulous abstract drawings that recall the detailed topographies of motherboards and have titles like "Bit Sampler." The concept is strained at times, as in the elaborate one-liner "Hardware vs. Software," an intricate "etching" on tin foil, wrapped around a Macintosh apple (the fruit, not the computer), paired with a desiccated piece of the fruit carved in a similar pattern. Maggi's strength is his draftsmanship; when it's left to shine unhindered by cleverness, as in the four-part "Pencil Monologues," the show is a joy. Through Jan. 31. (123 Watts, 123 Watts St. 219-1482.)

DENNIS OPPENHEIM
The art world's class clown gets a quasi-retrospective. Three decades of work fill the cavernous gallery with plenty of puppets and a disproportionate amount of really loud art (one installation, roped off for viewers' safety, sports a working pair of skeet-shooting machines). The pioneering earth and performance works that launched Oppenheim's career, represented here by photodocumentation, remain his most resonant. Witness the deadpan "Reading Position for a Second Degree Burn," before (pasty) and after (sunburned) shots of the artist lying on Jones Beach in 1970 with a book (titled "Tactics") on his chest for five hours. Its simplicity and wit trump the cacophony around it. Through Feb. 28. (Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

BRUCE PEARSON
The Williamsburg painter hides words or phrases ("Who's to Say That a Shoe is Not a Piece of Sculpture," for example) within mazes of carved and colored patterns. The results offer the retinal aggression of Op art, with a playfully cryptic afterglow. Instead of just staring at the patterns till they feel woozy, viewers get to do something—hunt for the hidden text, and then, presumably, mull over the difference between reading and looking. "My Planet Wants Me Dead," the most seductive of the images, is full of glistening inky-green hollows that give Pearson's cleverness the painterly gravity it sometimes lacks. Through Feb. 17. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

Short List

KUTLUG ATAMAN
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.
Through Feb. 24.

YEHUDIT SASPORTAS
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through Feb. 10.

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

KURT STRAHM / PATRICK JACOBS
Strahm has placed a random-sentence generator just inside the front door here; it's pumped full of nouns and verbs that assemble into grammatically correct nonsense. His paintings also rely on the illusion of structure. Works that at first look like weathered limestone or color closeups of the sur-

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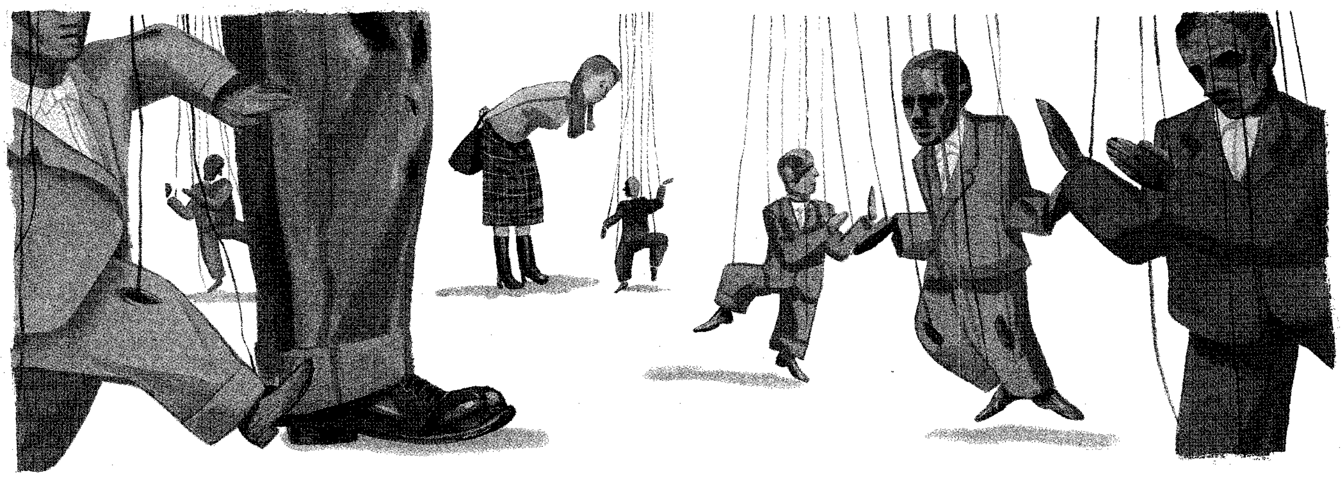
face of the moon turn out to be layers of acrylic, squeegeed across the canvas, then wiped away to create variations the eye reads as shadow and light. / Jacobs lists himself as a "pest control expert of some measure" and puts his extermination experience to good work here. The single photograph he displays, a mural-size black-and-white print from his "Bird Disaster" series, shows pedestrians walking around a group of dead sparrows on the sidewalk, who seem to have collided en masse with a nearby picture window. His much smaller dioramas model places around the home particularly vulnerable to vermin—a gutter spout, a sprinkler pipe, and the corner where the floor meets the molding, realistic down to its drippy multicoated surface of high-gloss paint. Both shows through Feb. 5. (Pierogi 2000, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144.)



"Theme for a Major Hit," a work with fifteen motorized marionettes, part of an exhibition by Dennis Oppenheim, at Ace.

ZOHAR LAZAR

"SERIAL NUMBERS"

This latest installment of Gale Gates's emerging-curators series is made up of works in series, almost all of them figurative. Ellen Harvey's clever "New York Beautification Project" starts the show off right. The English artist has been painting small, stylized, oval landscapes directly onto such spots as "Traffic Control Box on Southwest Corner of 96th St. and West End Ave." Paired photographs of the plein-air paintings show them first lost in the cityscape, then up close, isolated, and independent. Nearly as involving are Ann Katrine Senstad's works—head shots of young male Norwegians, many wearing similar sweaters, many with their brows raised or furrowed. Several other pieces that are worth the trip are Alyson Levy's "Janeane Garofalo's Little Sister Army," stills from an imagined television series; Laura Carton's porn photos digitally reconstructed without the central figures; and Joan Reidy's pencil-rendered yearbook pictures. Through Feb. 17. (Gale Gates, 37 Main St. 718-522-4596.)

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S

Jan. 25 at 10:15 A.M.: A major offering of Renaissance art works, mostly paintings, by such figures as Dürer, Veronese, and Botticelli; a highlight of the sale is Hans Hoffmann's "A Hare in a Forest," a tribute to Dürer. ♦ Jan. 25 at 2: Old Master paintings, including works by Salomon van Ruysdael and Antonio Carracci ("The Lamentation Over the Dead Christ"), along with works by Angelica Kauffman, Joshua Reynolds, and others. ♦ Jan. 27 at 10 A.M. and 2: Fine wines, including a large number of bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon from the outstanding 1985 vintage. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

Jan. 24 at 10 A.M.: Old Master drawings, including works by Boucher, Zuccaro, and Fra Bartolomeo. ♦ Jan. 24 at 2 and Jan. 25 at 10 A.M. and 2: Porcelain, furniture, carpets, and decorative objects from the Georgian era, along with paintings by Albertus Verhoesen. ♦ Jan. 26 at 10 A.M.: Old Master paintings by leading artists of the Dutch, Flemish, and Italian schools, including Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Gentleman in a Red Doublet." (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE

Jan. 24 at 10 A.M.: An offering of English and Continental furniture and decorations, along with a selection of Old Master paintings and drawings. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN

Jan. 25 at 10:30 A.M.: Old Master drawings from the English and Continental schools, including works from the circles of Rembrandt and Rubens, along with original pieces by Delacroix and Puvis de Chavannes. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

PARK AVENUE ANTIQUES SHOW

A broad selection of American and European furniture, rare books, paintings, and decorative accessories. (Wallace Hall, Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 288-3588. Jan. 26-28.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

ROY ARDEN

These black-and-white photographs, collectively titled "Terminal City," study the border between wilderness and urban life, around Vancouver's old train yards. Images of abandoned vehicles hang alongside views of umbrella-roofed shelters the city's homeless have built in fields of weeds. Through Feb. 3. (Dee/Glasoe, 529 W. 20th St. 924-7545.)

MARIANA COOK

The photographer of "Mothers and Sons" and "Fathers and Daughters" turns her attention to couples. Among the better-known subjects of her plain black-and-white portraits are Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Philip Johnson and David Whitney, and Allen Shawn and Jamaica Kincaid. Among the lesser known are a bear trainer married to a wolf trainer and a chain-saw-shop owner married to a sawmill worker. Through Feb. 17. (Mitchell-Innes and Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400.)

MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN

For suburban adolescents, the moderately picturesque, dimly lit locations known as lovers' lanes are sites of rites of passage—first kiss, first beer, and then some. Using only her car's headlights, Lichtenstein has made ten large color landscapes of those places, from the empty stands of a high-school football field to the back nine of a golf course. Her images are devoid of people and full of paranoia—it seems as if something might be groping in the shadows, or watching you. Through Feb. 10. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.)

NINO MIGLIORI

Migliori's "Neorealismo" shows postwar Italy in grainy, sentimental peacetime scenes—families gathered, priests smiling—and sharp, funny, surreal moments—women in matching shoes walking in step, monks playing volleyball. Norman Rockwell would have approved. Through March 3. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE

In 1877, Muybridge (1830-1904) settled the argument about whether a galloping horse lifts all four hooves off the ground at once, using twenty-four of the latest large-format cameras, their shutters rigged to strings that broke as his subject ran by. The answer, in sequential frames, was yes, the animal is airborne. Muybridge liked the project so much that he turned to humans, photographing them in mini-dramas: a man jumping over a hurdle, a woman lifting a baby. He was more a director than a photographer—the images resemble filmstrips, which they prefigure by about twenty years. Through Feb. 10. (Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.)

RON VAN DONGEN

Someone desperately wants these botanical studies to seem naughty—the show is called "Vulgaris," and the gallery literature draws oddball comparisons with the brothel chronicler E. J. Bellocq as well as the macabre fantasist Joel-Peter Witkin. Saluting stamens and pudendal petals are at a minimum in the front room's white-on-white works—the wholesome roses and tulips in their vases look as if they were meant for a portfolio drop-off at *Martha Stewart Living*. But a series in the back almost earns the innuendo; the works have layers of incredibly rich black tones and a menacing beauty, especially in closeups of a black dahlia and a star-shaped succulent. Through Feb. 18. (Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811.)

SHIZUKA YOKOMIZO

For "Dear Stranger," Yokomizo dropped unsigned notes at random houses in London, Tokyo, New York, and Berlin, asking occupants to stand in their living-room windows for ten minutes the next night and have their portraits taken through the glass. Enough people complied to fill the gallery with large color prints, and, thankfully, only one guy turned up in his Jockeys. The Japanese pictures are the handsomest—boxy, repeating grids in local design and décor supply harmony—but also the least mysterious. Most subjects, Eastern and Western, gaze through the glass with the kind of resigned skepticism that comes from indulging artistic experiments; voyeurism is more fun the old-fashioned way. Through Feb. 17. (Cohan Leslie and Brown, 138 Tenth Ave., at 19th. St. 206-8710.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Midtown, an Andy Warhol retrospective and "Perfecting Mankind: Eugenics and Photography" will be on display through March 18. Uptown, George Tice's "Urban Landscapes" and Carrie Mae Weems's "The Hampton Project" open Jan. 27. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

THOMAS JOSHUA COOPER
Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.
Through March 3.

HAROLD EDGERTON
Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.
Through Jan. 27.

NAN GOLDIN
Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.
Through Feb. 17.

CARLO MOLLINO
Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067.
Through March 3.

"AMERICAN"
Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.
Through Feb. 10.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Whitney Museum.

TABLES FOR TWO

SWIFTY'S

1007 Lexington Ave. (535-6000)—The city's most appropriately named newish restaurant is this instantly fashionable nook on the Upper East Side; its namesake is a pug that belonged to Glenn Bernbaum, the late owner of Mortimer's, who named the dog after the legendary Hollywood dealmaker Irving (Swifty) Lazar. The worst thing that Lazar could say about someone was "He's got no class," and Swifty's positively reeks of it, with the old-money coziness of its chocolatey leather banquettes and its tangerine-sherbet walls, which are covered with polished mirrors and sumptuous still-lifes, Constable-like landscapes, and portraits of floppy-eared dogs. The clientele is strictly (but not stuffily) O.C.D.—or at least what passes for "our class, dear" in a neighborhood where people don't feel secure unless they're on cheek-pecking terms with the majority of their fellow-diners. There is even a touch of the sort of discomfort that the best-heeled New Yorkers seem to require before arriving at "their" table. Between the buzzing, narrow front room and the handsome, more spacious back room is an alleyway that does triple duty as a storage area for minks, a pickup station for the waiters, and a vestibule for the lavatories. On a recent night, things in the bottleneck got a little harried when the maitre d', who was stuck in the crush, could be heard calling out to someone in the back room, "Mrs. Radziwill needs a table!"

Swifty's fare belongs mostly to the club-food category, broadened, with no surprises, to demonstrate an easygoing familiarity with the world beyond the 10021 Zip Code. The best starters include corn fritters with salmon roe and tuna carpaccio with ginger. The standouts among the entrées are red snapper with chanterelles in a port-wine sauce, risotto with chicken livers, and a terrific mixed grill of lamb chop, venison, quail, and smoked bacon. It's all extremely well prepared, but for this crowd the real classics are the array of side dishes meant to evoke memories (real or imagined) of growing up in the perfect nursery—among them, velvety creamed spinach and the not-too-tangy Swifty's Slaw. For dessert, nothing could be more comforting than the ginger ice cream with lace cookies. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $18-$31.)

—*Charles Michener*

CLASSICAL MUSIC
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METROPOLITAN OPERA

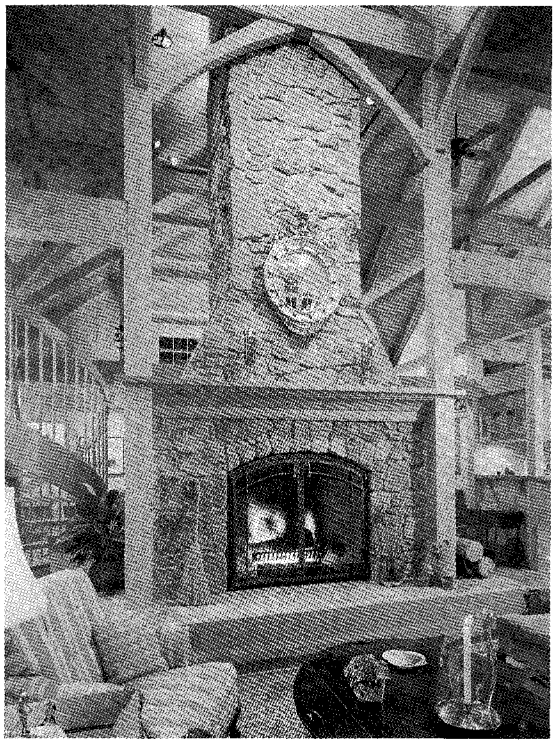
"Carmen," with Irina Mishura, Janice Watson, Richard Leech, and Franck Ferrari; conducted by Bertrand de Billy. (Jan. 24 and Jan. 27 at 8.) ♦ The Met's first-ever presentation of Busoni's **"Doktor Faust"**—one of the most mysterious and compelling operas of the twentieth century—closes this week; its largely abstract, throw-away-the-stage-directions production is conceptually coherent, if lacking in warmth. The singing of Thomas Hampson (as Faust), Katarina Dalayman (as the Duchess of Parma), and Robert Brubaker (as Mephistopheles) is uniformly strong, while Philippe Auguin, facing the difficult task of replacing James Levine, conducts a lyrical, soft-edged account of the score. (Jan. 25 and Jan. 29 at 8.) ♦ **"Un Ballo in Maschera,"** Verdi's greatest ensemble piece, with Michele Crider, Youngok Shin, Elena Zaremba, Franco Farina, and Alexandru Agache; Plácido Domingo conducts. (Jan. 26 at 8.) ♦ **"Aida,"** with Deborah Voigt, Olga Borodina, Luciano Pavarotti, and Mark Delavan; James Levine. (Jan. 27 at 1.) ♦ With Barbara Dever replacing Ms. Borodina. (Jan. 30 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

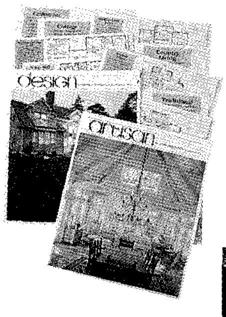
"ONLY HEAVEN"

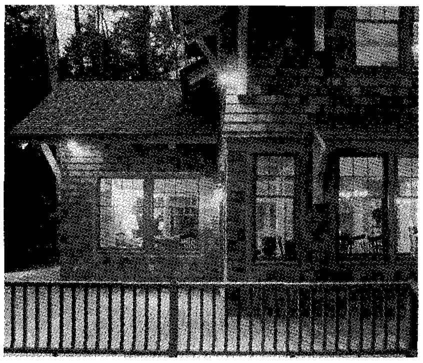
Encompass New Opera Theatre presents a revival of Ricky Ian Gordon's music-theatre piece, based on the poetry of Langston Hughes. With Sherry Boone, Monique McDonald, Keith Byron Kirk, and Michael Lofton; Charles Prince conducts. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St., between Avenues A and B. 206-1515. Jan. 24-26 at 8, Jan. 27 at 3 and 8, and Jan. 28 at 3.)

"MARIA DE BUENOS AIRES"

Trained as a classical composer by no less a pedagogue than Nadia Boulanger, the Argentine Astor Piazzolla (1921-92) transformed the tango into a musically sophisticated form without sacrificing







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its silky elegance and sexual vitality. The story of the operetta "Maria de Buenos Aires" (which mystified its first Latin audiences in 1968) concerns a poor young girl who descends into prostitution and death, only to be reborn as a ghost who gives birth to a new Maria, a metaphor for the city in which she lives. The pianist Pablo Zinger conducts a concert version of the work, with Nancy Herrera and Bruce Rameker in the leading roles. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Jan. 28 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The orchestra, back from its tour of Spain, resumes its season with music from Germany and England, led by Andrew Davis: Britten's "Sinfonia da Requiem," Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 (with the powerful young soloist Sarah Chang), and Strauss's "Also Sprach Zarathustra," an inevitable work in this Year of the Monolith. (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 25 at 8, Jan. 26 at 11 A.M., Jan. 27 at 8, and Jan. 30 at 7:30.) ♦ A repeat of the Strauss, along with chamber works by Mozart (the Serenade in E-Flat Major for Winds) and Dvořák (his Piano Quartet in the same key). (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Jan. 27 at 2.)

CARNEGIE HALL CHORAL WORKSHOP
This intensive five-day workshop for singers and conductors was inaugurated in 1990 by Robert Shaw, a conductor who towered over the choral-music canon. Neville Marriner follows in Shaw's footsteps this year, ending the conference with the traditional concert (with the Orchestra of St. Luke's): this one consists of Rossini's "Stabat Mater" and Vivaldi's "Gloria," the kind of sparkling, Italianate repertory at which Marriner excels. Christine Brewer, Heidi Grant Murphy, Susanne Mentzer, Stanford Olsen, and John Relyea are the soloists. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 24 at 8.)

DRESDEN STAATSKAPELLE
The Dresden orchestra, renowned for its discipline and historical pedigree (Schütz, Wagner, and Weber all conducted there), presents two concerts with its music director Giuseppe Sinopoli, known for his interpretive extravagance. Jan. 26 at 8: An all-Beethoven program, including the Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8. ♦ Jan. 28 at 3: Mahler's Symphony No. 6. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500.)

VERDI'S "REQUIEM"
Vincent La Selva conducts the orchestra and chorus of his New York Grand Opera Company in Verdi's choral masterpiece, commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the composer's death. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 27 at 8:30.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY
Jens Nygaard leads a program of Strauss (the "Festival March"), Beethoven (the "Pastoral" Symphony), and Bartók (the Concerto for Two Pianos, with Jerome Lowenthal and Ursula Oppens). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259. Jan. 29 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 30 at 8.)

RECITALS

MUSIC AT THE ANTHOLOGY
The final two concerts of a four-part series devoted to the contemporary composer-performer, including several premières. Jan. 25 at 8: The ensemble Gamelan Son of Lion plays music by Lou Harrison, Gee-Bum Kim, Patrick Grant, David Demnitz, Frances White, and Jeffrey Lependorf. ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: Music by John Ferguson, Lindsay Vickery, Charles Ives, and others; the Brooklyn turntable quartet The X-ecutioners are the guest ensemble. (Angel Orensanz Foundation, 172 Norfolk St., at E. Houston St. For more information, call 917-237-1995.)

RUTH LAREDO
The pianist, along with the St. Lawrence String Quartet, plays music by Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Schumann (the Piano Quartet). (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 570-3949. Jan. 26 at 7.)

"A GREAT DAY IN NEW YORK"
The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center continues Fred Sherry's nine-concert celebration of New York composers. Jan. 26 at 7:30: Music by Philip Glass, Richard Rodney Bennett, Lukas Foss, Elliott Carter, Fred Lerdahl, Jerome Kitzke, George Perle, Martin Bresnick, and Michael Torke. (Alice Tully Hall.) ♦ Jan. 30 at 7:30: Music by Chen Yi, Tobias Picker, Sebastian Currier, Paul Lansky, Bruce Adolphe, Oliver Lake, and Stephen Sondheim (a selection of his songs). (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500.)

ORNETTE COLEMAN / SEBASTIAN CURRIER
In one of the strangest new-music pairings of the year, the ensemble Composers Concordance combines two concert works by Mr. Coleman, the free-jazz titan, with two by Mr. Currier, one of the most gifted of the baby-boomer New Romantics. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Jan. 26 at 8.)

"FOCUS! 2001"
The Juilliard School's seventeenth annual festival of contemporary music, held at the Juilliard Theatre, turns its gaze on Italian music written since the death of Verdi. Jan. 26 at 8: Ensemble works by Petrassi, Berio, Sciarrino, and others. ♦ Jan. 29 at 8: Chamber works by Busoni, Casella, Donatoni, and others. ♦ Jan. 30 at 8: Another chamber program, including music by Maderna, Malipiero, and Romitelli. (155 W. 65th St. For information about tickets, call 769-7406.)

DAVID WALKER
The countertenor, noted not only for his lithesome voice but for his willingness to sing opera (briefly) in the nude, makes his Weill Recital Hall début in a program featuring music by Handel, Mozart, and Duparc, which he will presumably perform clothed. The pianist Timothy Hoekman accompanies him. (247-7800. Jan. 26 at 8.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800
The fifteenth-century Burgundian court of Philip the Good boasted an unusually strong stable of composers, Ockeghem, Binchois, Busnois, and Du Fay among them. Pomerium, the noted eight-voice choir, sings their music at Corpus Christi Church. (529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Jan. 28 at 4.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Jan. 27 at 2: By the poet Joan Larkin and the writer Daniel Mendelsohn, from their work. (Jefferson Market Library, Sixth Ave. at 10th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 28 at 7: By John D'Agata, from his collection of essays, "Halls of Fame," and by Phillip Lopate, from his essays. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 29 at 7: The Hanging Loose Press editors Bob Hershon, Dick Lourie, Mark Pawlak, and Ron Schreiber join the authors Paul Violi, Kimiko Hahan, and Donna Brook to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the publishing house and magazine. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

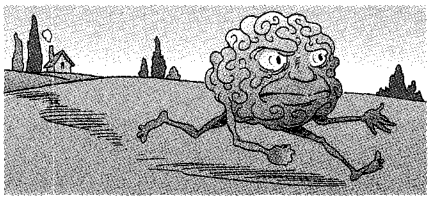
TALKS
Jan. 25 at 6:30: Dan Hinkley, the director of Heronswood Nursery, inaugurates the Wave Hill Horticultural Lecture Series with a discussion of the seven-and-a-half-acre garden he's maintained for the past thirteen years on the Kitsap Peninsula, in Washington. (Hunter College School of Social Work Auditorium, 129 E. 79th St. For more information, call 718-549-3200, ext. 260.) ♦ Jan. 29 at 7: Jeffrey Mehlman, a professor of modern foreign languages and literature at Boston University and the author of "Emigré New York," talks about how Saint-Exupéry, Lévi-Strauss, and other French intellectuals adapted to living in New York City during the Second World War. (French Institute–Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. 355-6100.)

TOUR
Jan. 27 at 2: The decorative-arts scholar Elizabeth Bidwell Bates goes behind the scenes at the Morris-Jumel Mansion, a home built in 1765 for the British general Roger Morris and later owned by the legendary real-estate entrepreneur Eliza Jumel. (65 Jumel Terrace, between 160th and 162nd Sts. 923-8008.)

BOOK CURRENTS

The Great Brain

Despite all the insights of phrenology, psychoanalysis, and now the Human Genome Project, human beings are still trying to make sense of what's between their ears. One obstacle, at least for the general public, is that often the only thing more baffling than the brain itself is the terminology used to describe it. John J. Ratey, M.D., takes a step in the right direction with **A USER'S GUIDE TO THE BRAIN** (Pantheon), an introduction to neuroscience which sticks to a man-on-the-street vocabulary. Ratey, a professor of psychiatry, breaks down brain activity into four "theaters": perception, consciousness, function, and identity. He rejects the familiar characterization of the brain as a computer, arguing that the organ is less a machine than an ecosystem, a jungle of synaptic networks that evolve through "neural Darwinism."



Like an ecosystem, the brain can be either resilient or fragile. Many people who suffer brain damage regain their faculties; others are less fortunate. In **ALTERED EGOS** (Oxford), Todd E. Feinberg, M.D., draws on case studies from his own practice to explore a wide array of neurological disorders, including alien-hand syndrome, where one of a person's hands behaves of its own accord.

Some brain ailments are so bizarre that they suggest science fiction rather than neurology. Not to be outdone, sci-fi authors are forced to come up with even more outrageous afflictions. In Joan Slonczewski's **BRAIN PLAGUE** (Tor), a starving artist on the planet Valedon agrees to let a colony of "brain enhancers" occupy her skull. These microscopic creatures live in the brain's outer linings, causing bursts of genius—or irreparable harm. The creatures themselves are like tiny human beings; one of their greatest concerns is getting their young to breed. Not to worry, one of the elders counsels: "We'll build nightclubs."

—*William Cohen*

TONY MILLIONAIRE

Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

We Have What Moves You

A HEART OF STONE

by Renate Dorrestein

In a poignant tale of love, fate and survival, a woman's return to her childhood home in Holland finds her confronting ghosts from years past, setting the stage for a passionate and suspenseful story. (Viking)

Pub. Price: $23.95
Our Price: $19.16
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Member's Price: $17.24

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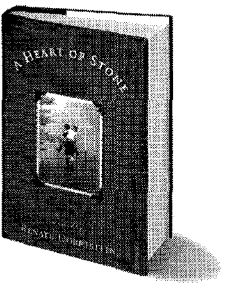
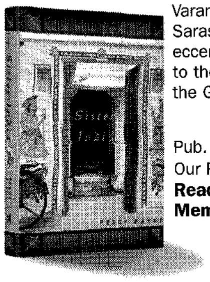


SISTER INDIA

by Peggy Payne

When an outbreak of religious violence in the Indian holy city of Varanasi imprisons a group of travelers in the Saraswati Guest House—under the care of the eccentric Madame Natraja—they soon fall prey to the spell of this disturbing, ancient city by the Ganges. (Riverhead Books)



Pub. Price: $24.95
Our Price: $19.96
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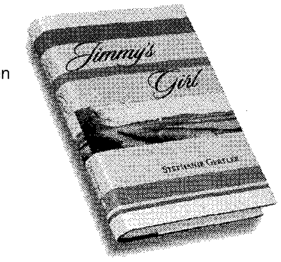
Member's Price: $17.96

JIMMY'S GIRL

by Stephanie Gertler

After thirty years, Emily and James reconnect and risk their stable, happy family lives to meet and discover if first love deserves a second chance. Told from both perspectives, this compassionate tale explores the different ways that men and women think and act. (Dutton)



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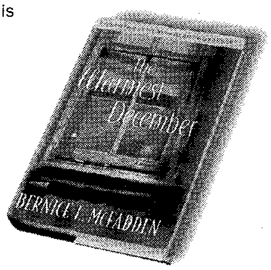
Member's Price: $16.52

THE WARMEST DECEMBER

by Bernice L. McFadden

The bestselling author of *Sugar* creates the moving story of Kensie Lowe, a young Brooklyn woman who has an epiphany when she visits her abusive, alcoholic father on his deathbed. (Dutton)



Pub. Price: $22.95
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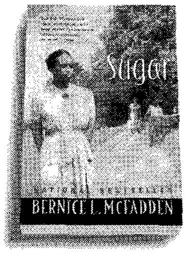
Readers' Advantage
Member's Price: $16.52

SUGAR

by Bernice L. McFadden

A Blackboard bestseller, this vivid novel tells the tale of a young prostitute who moves to a small Arkansas town to start her life over. When Sugar and a neighbor strike up an unlikely friendship, their lives are forever transformed. (Plume)



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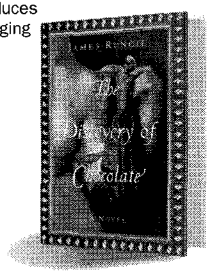
DISCOVER
GREAT NEW WRITERS AT BARNES & NOBLE

THE DISCOVERY OF CHOCOLATE

by James Runcie

This rich, historical debut novel focuses on a young Spaniard who falls in love with a native woman who introduces him to the exotic delights of chocolate, bringing him the gift of immortality. (Harper)



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MOVIES OPENING

FAITHLESS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Jan. 26. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

THE LEGEND OF RITA
A Cold War drama about a group of West German radicals who rob banks in the spirit of anticapitalist revolution. Directed by Volker Schlöndorff. In German. Opening Jan. 24. (Film Forum.)

ROAD TO PARK CITY
Bret Stern directed this mock documentary about the efforts of a tyro filmmaker to make a movie that will win at Sundance. Opening Jan. 26. (Pioneer.)

TWO NINAS
A romantic comedy about a writer (Ron Livingston) who dates a brunette (Cara Buono) and a blonde (Amanda Peet), both named Nina. Written and directed by Neil Turitz. Opening Jan. 26.

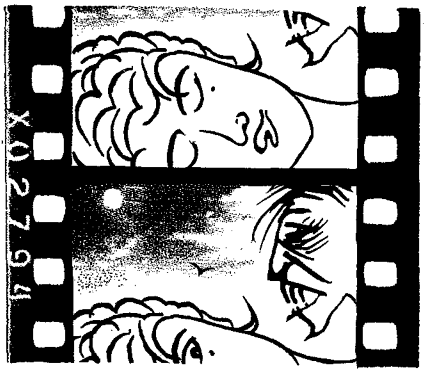
THE WEDDING PLANNER
Jennifer Lopez plays a San Francisco wedding planner who falls for the fiancé (Matthew McConaughey) of her biggest client. Directed by Adam Shankman. Opening Jan. 26.

FILM NOTES

BEFORE NIGHT FALLS
At its best, Julian Schnabel's second film is a memoir of easy and raffish good times—the endless summer days at the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Schnabel adapted an autobiographical memoir by the poet and novelist Reinaldo Arenas (Javier Bardem), a homosexual who was initially a participant in the revolution, then a victim of it, and was finally allowed to leave Cuba in 1980. Arenas settled in New York, wrote a great deal, and, suffering from AIDS, committed suicide here in 1990. Schnabel doesn't tell this story coherently: characters appear or disappear without explanation, and we don't always know where we are. The method is closer to collage than to Hollywood script construction, but Schnabel works sensually, and that makes up for a lot. Bardem, who has the face of a shy, smiling bull, gives a performance of great charm.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/8/01.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CAST AWAY
Tom Hanks, a cheerful, bullying American efficiency expert, finds himself with nothing but time on his hands after his airplane crashes and he's left stranded on a desert island. The greatest thing about this old-fashioned adventure film is its extraordinary physical detail—for a good three-quarters of an hour Hanks doesn't say a word as he re-creates the elements of civilization. The director, Robert Zemeckis, and the screenwriter, William Broyles, Jr., attend to such things as the peculiar noise that the wind makes in a cave and the moaning singsong of a whale just before it surfaces. The movie dissolves irony: as much as possible it brings us back to the essence of our physical existence. It's the best Robinson Crusoe picture ever made.—*D.D.* (12/18/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

CHOCOLAT
A confectionary fairy tale, photographed in pale-lemon winter light. In France in 1960, a beautiful and charming woman (Juliette Binoche) and her little girl (Victoire Thivisol) waft into a small town, open a chocolaterie, and provide the unhappy and repressed inhabitants with exactly the kind of bonbons they need to make their troubles go away (the chocolate, laced with an old Mayan powder, acts as an all-purpose elixir). This inspires the hostility of the town's impotent deity, the Comte de Reynaud (Alfred Molina), who rallies the forces of reaction. Lasse Hallström's production is yet another complacent movie about the free spirits versus the squares; this one commends the audience for favoring such dangerous things as eating, dancing, friendship, sex, and riverboats. In English.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)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CHUNHYANG
Imagine a cross between a Homeric rhapsode, chanting one of the epics in front of a roaring fire, and the blues singer Muddy Waters. That's roughly the sound produced by the great Korean entertainer Cho Sang Hyun. As the film opens, he sits onstage before a contemporary audience and sings of an eighteenth-century Korean Romeo and Juliet. Then we see the tale: in Namwon Province, the governor's son—fifteen-year-old Mongryong (Cho Seung Woo), who has a man's voice and a man's determination—falls in love with, pursues, and immediately marries Chunhyang (Lee Hyo Jung), the beautiful daughter of a courtesan. The scenes of the slender teen-agers courting and making love have a delicate erotic strength—a mixture of shyness and lust—that is nearly unimaginable in a modern Western setting. When Mongryong goes away to Seoul to study, his bride falls into the hands of the evil new provincial governor, who wants to turn her into a courtesan. Throughout, the story is sung to us—it's a lyrical epic—so we accept the absence of psychological realism and the abrupt plot turns. Directed by Im Kwon Taek, who has made more than ninety films. In Korean.—*D.D.* (1/22/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON
The new Ang Lee film is scripted in Cantonese and Mandarin and set in the China of the early nineteenth century, although we could be watching a fable from any time in the last millennium, or from no time at all. Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), probably the least excitable action heroine in modern movies, is given a sword by Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat), for safekeeping. Needless to say, it is soon stolen, and the hunt is on. When pursuing a likely suspect, Mu Bai and Shu Lien tend to take the quickest route, whether it's up a wall, over a roof, across a lake, or, best of all, from tree to tree. They don't fly so much as dance through the air, taking fairy-tale strides. Athletic honors are shared between Yeoh and Zhang Ziyi, who plays a rebellious young noblewoman with a fiery past. The outright winner is Ang Lee, who is at once dependably stylish and smartly unpredictable.—*Anthony Lane* (12/11/00) (Angelika Film Center, Astor Plaza, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 64th and 2nd.)

FELLINI SATYRICON
Fellini's big pagan ball, with the debauchery of the pre-Christian Roman world at the time of Nero as an analogue of the modern post-Christian period. In "La Dolce Vita," he used the orgies of modern Rome as a parallel to ancient Rome, and now he reverses the analogy to make the same point—that man without a belief in God is a lecherous beast. This 1970 film is full of cautionary images of depravity that seem to come out of the imagination of a Catholic schoolboy: an unconscionable number of performers stick out their evil tongues at us, and there are leering cripples, fat freaks with hideous grins, and so on. Fellini draws upon his master entertainer's feeling for the daydreams of the audience, and many people find this film eerie, spellbinding, and even profound. Essentially, though, it's just a hip version of De Mille's "The Sign of the Cross." Fellini is the only star. He uses Petronius and other classic sources as the basis for a movie that is one long orgy of eating, drinking, cruelty, and copulation. We seem to be at a stoned circus, where the performers go on and on whether we care or not. In Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Jan. 26-30.)

THE GIFT
After the snows of "A Simple Plan," Sam Raimi warms up by venturing south; his new movie was shot in Savannah, Georgia, although it still tries to chill the blood. Cate Blanchett stars as Annie, who combines the demanding roles of widow, single mother, clairvoyant, and shrink. One of her clients (Hilary Swank) complains of a violent husband (Keanu Reeves), who not only menaces Annie but ends up taking the rap for the disappearance of a local good-time girl (Katie Holmes). Add Greg Kinnear as an ominously pleasant wimp, and you have a full-strength cast bending its talents to fit a small piece of Gothic nonsense. You get sharp frights and looming fogs, plus innumerable nods to the perils of water, but running underneath it all is a sluggish solemnity, a hint that these horrors are meant to be important. As Raimi's budgets have grown, his cackling sense of fun has begun to shrivel. With Giovanni Ribisi, in a performance he may wish to forget.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE HOUSE OF MIRTH
The evidence suggests that Edith Wharton may be easier and more rewarding to film than Henry James. "The Age of Innocence" returned Martin Scorsese to his old, obsessive form, and now the British director Terence Davies has been inspired to his best work by Wharton's earlier and less elaborate novel—her first major success, which sold a hundred and forty thousand copies in its first couple of months. Whether moviegoers will match that enthusiasm is hard to tell; there is grace and passion on show here, but they are firmly and gradually stifled. By the film's close, the weight of the wrong done to the heroine, Lily Bart, feels unredeemed. Gillian Anderson lends Bart a fine air of pride and craving. As she spurns the offer of a safe marriage from a property tycoon (Anthony LaPaglia), or of fleshly compromise with the porcine Gus Trenor (Dan Aykroyd), we believe both in her principles and in the certainty of her doom. The film was shot in Scotland, and it shows; this could not be the New York of 1905, or of any era, yet you can still be convinced by the swift concentration of Davies's method.—*A.L.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Paris.)

THE MAN WHO LAUGHS
No one who saw this silent movie as a child is likely to have forgotten it. The Victor Hugo story is about fairly conventional seventeenth-century English court intrigues, except for one detail about the hero, Gwynplaine (Conrad Veidt). The heir to an earldom, he was kidnapped as a child and, at the orders of the king, a political enemy of his father, he was mutilated—his face carved into a perpetual grin. He had no choice but to become a clown. Produced in 1928 by Universal on a lavish scale, the film is by no means a cheap horror story. The German-born director Paul Leni has a true gift for macabre décor, and the film's ambitious mixture of morbidity and historical melodrama is very effective, even with its heavy sentimentality.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 26-27.)

MEANTIME
Like his beloved (and very different) 1991 feature "Life Is Sweet," Mike Leigh's 1983 made-for-TV film is a tale of two sisters: one a poor London housewife with a husband and two sons, all unemployed; the other an upwardly mobile suburban housewife with no children. The story hinges on the well-off sister's attempt to help her emotionally and possibly mentally impaired nephew (Tim Roth) by hiring him to paint a room in her house. This movie bubbles with a simmering blend of inertia, sullenness, and anomie. Yet it's invigorating. Leigh depicts blocked characters in a manner that relies on

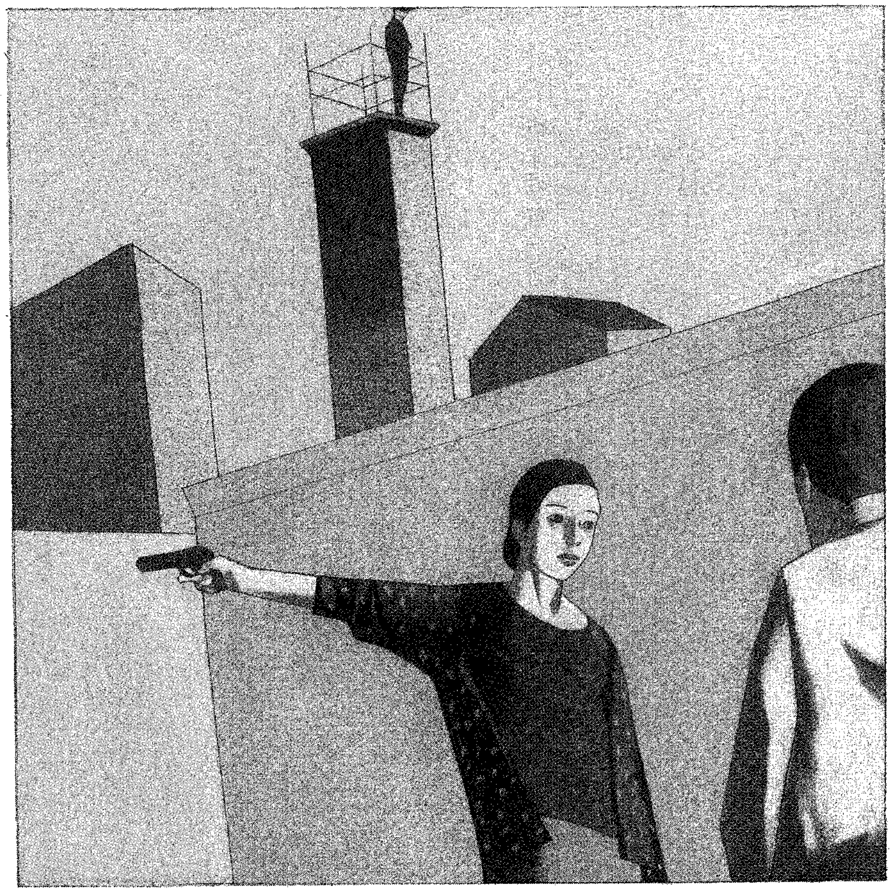
tactile details, so he gets close to the rude feelings that grumble up from uneasy bellies. In a cast that includes Gary Oldman, Alfred Molina, and Phil Daniels, Roth stands out with a stubbornness and orneriness that save him from victimhood.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 26.)

O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?

Although the new Coen brothers picture is set in the Depression, the mood of the tale is a deliberate antidepressant. Dark things happen from time to time, but they are rendered with comic glee. Are the Coens being withering or irresponsible when they turn a fiery rally of Klansmen into an occasion for slapstick? Few dogs could be shaggier than the plot, in which three escaped convicts (George Clooney, John Turturro, and Tim Blake Nelson) take a circuitous route home, tripping over a string of Homeric jokes—sultry sirens on a riverbank, John Goodman as a smilingly brutal Cyclops—along the way. The result is never less than enjoyable, and Clooney looks particularly upbeat, but some viewers may sense a fatal lack of grip; undetained by plausibility, this jest of a movie feels even more directionless than its heroes.—*A.L.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

THE PLEDGE

Glum, affecting realism from Sean Penn, directing his third film. In the Reno area, a retired police detective, Jerry Black (Jack Nicholson), becomes convinced that a rapist-murderer who strikes at little girls is about to strike again. Jerry is a good man, but he's so obsessed with the case that he loses his judgment. He takes in a battered waitress (Robin Wright Penn) and her little daughter, and with horror we realize that his feelings for the girl won't stop him from using her as a lure. The movie, based on a novel by the late Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt, offers a bleak view of isolated people living close to madness. The despair comes heavily and unrelentingly—the colors are mainly gray, the climate wintry—but it feels authentic, and, as a sustained mood, it pulls us into the story. With Sam Shepard and Aaron Eckhart as cops, and Vanessa Redgrave, Helen Mirren, and Mickey Rourke as townspeople. A worthy movie, but don't go expecting an easy time of it.—*D.D.* (1/22/01) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Union Square.)



Opening January 24, Bibiana Beglau in Volker Schlöndorff's "The Legend of Rita."

HERVÉ BLONDON

SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE

Or, how to blow a really good idea. The director E. Elias Merhige, noting the deathless appeal of F. W. Murnau's "Nosferatu," has decided to recreate the making of the film. We are transported to nineteen-twenties Berlin for scenes of dreary decadence and from there to a rural movie set, where the obsessive Murnau (John Malkovich) struggles to control the eccentric conduct of Max Schreck (Willem Dafoe), his leading man. "Nosferatu" was one of the earliest "Dracula" adaptations, and it remains the best, but you would never know that from the amateurish mania that prevails here. Merhige buys happily into the rumor that Schreck was a real vampire—bad news for Catherine McCormack, who plays the love interest, and finds that Schreck is only interested in her neck.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (84th Street Sixplex, State, and Union Square.)

SHOW PEOPLE

William Randolph Hearst insisted that Marion Davies appear in costume pictures; he liked her to be a romantic maiden, and—what was irreconcilable with her talent—dignified. But in the late twenties she broke out and made some funny pictures: "The Red Mill," "The Fair Coed," the wonderfully good-humored "The Patsy," and this 1928 slapstick parody of Gloria Swanson's career—about how fame went to her head. Hearst wouldn't let Davies do a custard-pie sequence, despite her pleas and those of the director, King Vidor, and of Laurence Stallings, who was one of the writers. The film is light and deft and charming. William Haines plays opposite Davies, and there are also glimpses of Hollywood's fashionable celebrities as themselves: John Gilbert, Mae Murray, Charles Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, and Elinor Glyn. Silent.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Jan. 29.)

SNATCH

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

STATE AND MAIN

Movies about movies are seldom as funny as they should be; maybe it's because, as targets go, the film business is about as hard to hit as a brontosaurus. This latest assault is by David Mamet; his hero, played by Philip Seymour Hoffman, is sincere and sensitive, whereas pretty much everyone around him is a bullheaded jerk. Somehow, this setup lacks the gleaming ring of truth. The location is a sweet small town that is infested by the cast and crew of a period drama, including the star (Alec Baldwin) with a taste for underage girls, the leading lady (Sarah Jessica Parker) with a distaste for nudity, and the calmly despairing director (William H. Macy). With actors like these, the whole thing should have been a riot, but Mamet has always been more tough guy than funnyman, and you find yourself waiting expectantly for laughs that never come.—*A.L.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Union Square, and Waverly.)

THIRTEEN DAYS

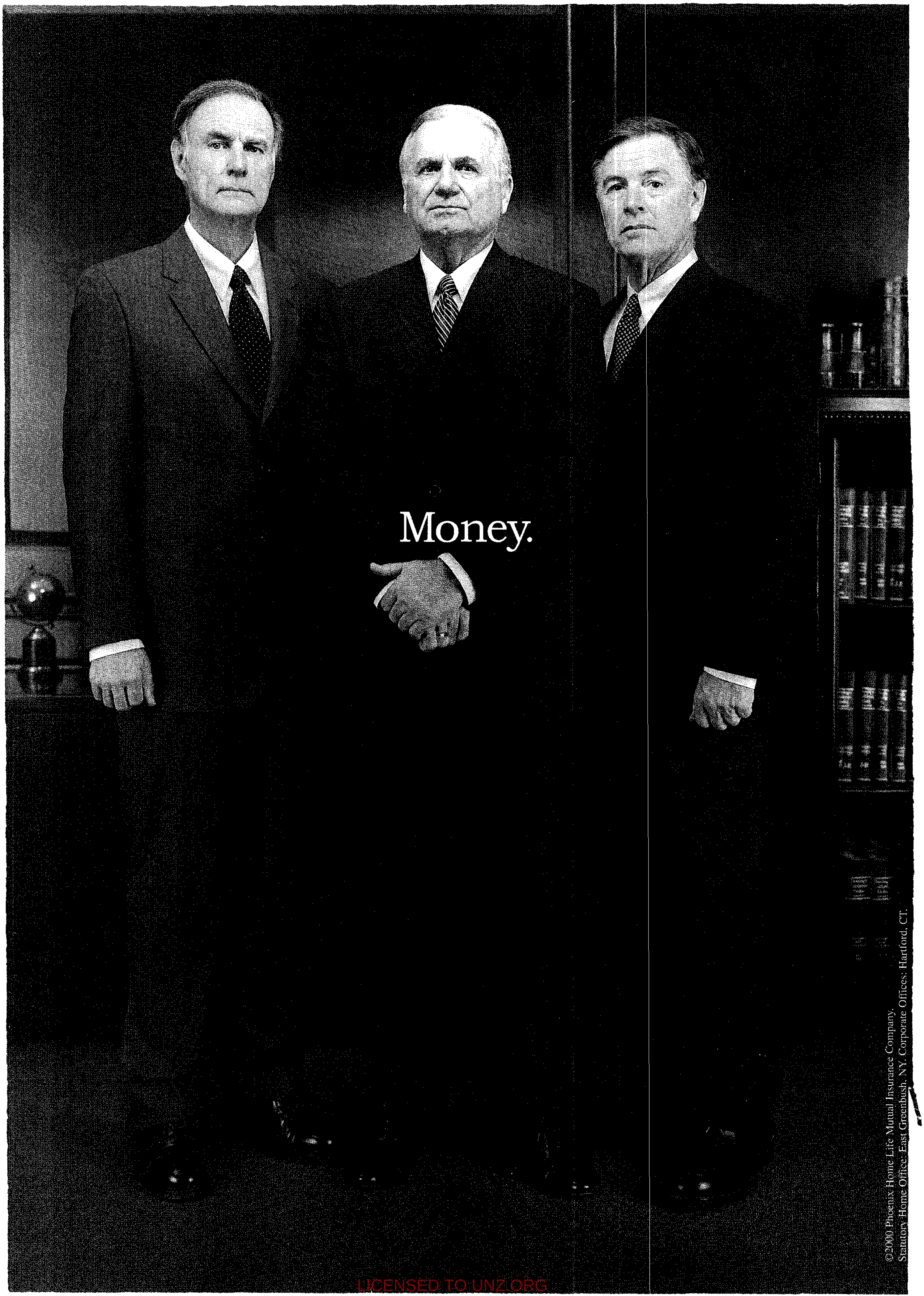
The Cuban Missile Crisis once again, told this time through the eyes of Kenny O'Donnell (Kevin Costner), the outspoken yet loyal Boston-Irish pol who wound up as special assistant to President Kennedy in the White House. As always, the story is engrossing and frightening, and it's salutary to be reminded how close we came to nuclear war with the Soviets in 1962. The American military leaders—who tried to pressure Kennedy into immediately bombing the missile sites in Cuba—come off as reckless, the Kennedy clan as cool and resourceful. Unfortunately, most of the actors, wrestling with their regional accents, lack stature, and the staging is generally stiff and unconvincing. Written by David Self; directed by Roger Donaldson. The stock footage of nuclear explosions is alarmingly beautiful.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

TRAFFIC

Tremendous stuff from the first shot to the last. Steven Soderbergh's vivid and wide-spanning view of the "war on drugs" presents three parallel stories, each with its own look and style: the furtive and ambiguous work of two Mexican state troopers (Benicio Del Toro and Jacob Vargas); the frantic investigations of the new American drug czar (Michael Douglas), who discovers that his beautiful, intelligent sixteen-year-old daughter (Erika Christensen) is freebasing cocaine; and the luxurious life of a San Diego woman (Catherine Zeta-Jones) who tries to hold on to her fortune when her drug-kingpin husband (Steven Bauer) is arrested and made to stand trial. The first story is photographed in tobacco-stain brown, the second with blue filters, the third in bright sunshine—all by Soderbergh himself, who puts the camera on his shoulder and throws us into the middle of the action. Individually, the scenes play with superb toughness, and the over-all impression is one of high intelligence and great good humor threading its way through a morass.—*D.D.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME

The first-rate actress Laura Linney—bland on the surface but with angry impulses churning underneath—gives a detailed and involving performance as a single working mother in a small and somewhat boring upstate New York town. When her screwup of a kid brother (Mark Ruffalo) returns from Alaska, she's torn between tossing him out and letting him stay on and become a companion to her fatherless son (Rory Culkin). The movie was written and directed by the playwright and screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan, who pays close attention to the way so many of us are divided between good and



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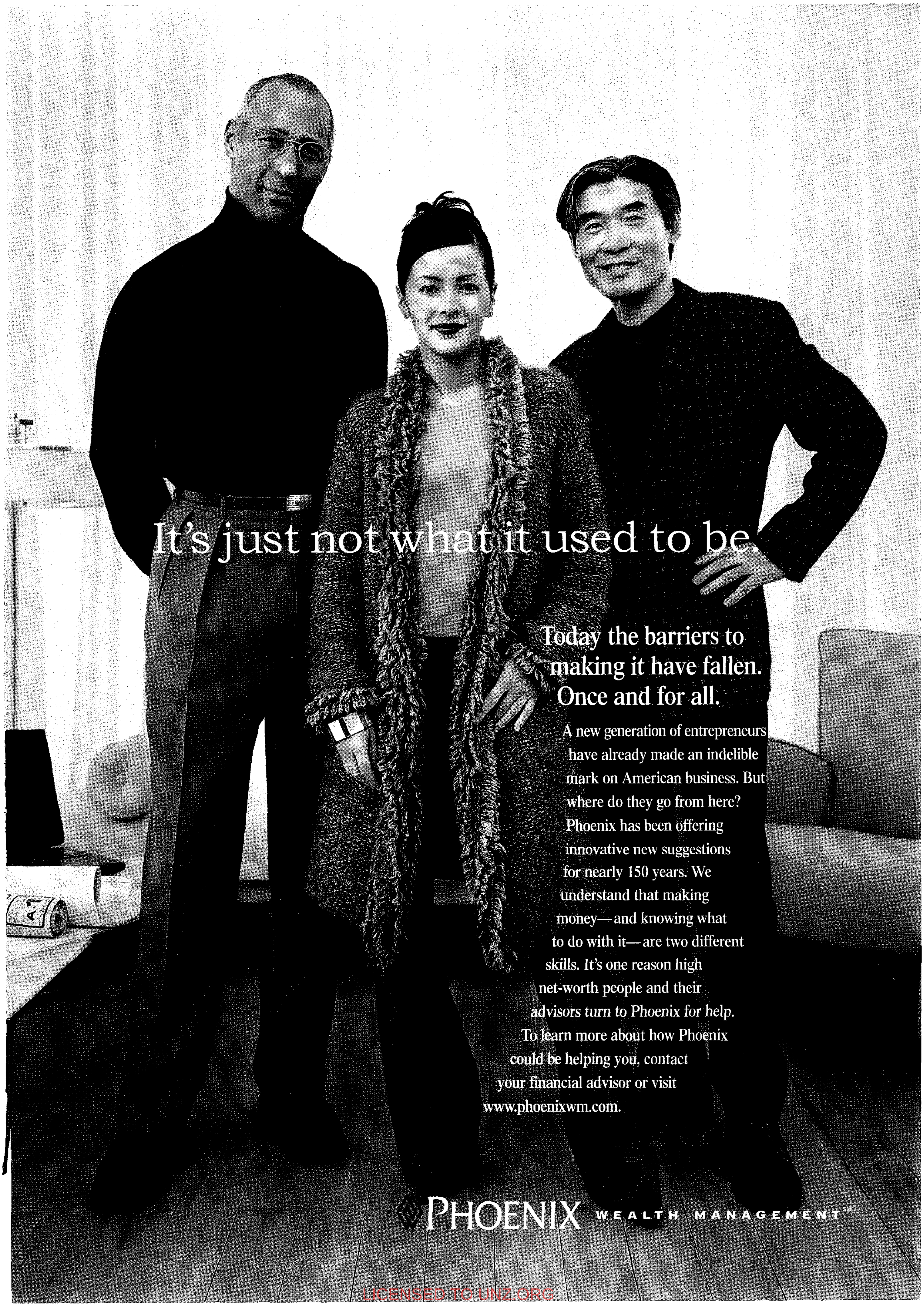

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bad impulses—including bad impulses we desperately need to act on if we're not going to feel half-dead. Lonergan's work is quiet but intense, and Ruffalo—dark and sensual and agonizingly confused—gives a heartbreaking performance.—*D.D.* (12/18/00) (Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

YI YI (A ONE AND A TWO)
Marvellous. It begins with a wedding and ends with a funeral, and, in a style that could only be called radiantly matter-of-fact, Edward Yang's movie encompasses the life of a large Taiwanese family and such central elements of middle-class existence as business ethics and the disillusionment of reaching the age of forty-five. The characters live in an Americanized work environment, yet certain emotions nearly lost to Americans, such as modesty and shame, still rule their lives. Yang works very deliberately; you have to slow yourself down to get into the pace of the movie, but once you do every shot seems momentous. He doesn't carve up the space, he frames it, and he excels at portraiture. A character stands alone, in a doorway, or at a window, and Yang is so attentive that he gets the revelation that he wants, tenderly, quietly, before moving on. With Wu Nienjen as the executive father and Jonathan Chang as his indomitably curious little boy. In English, Hokkien, and Mandarin.—*D.D.* (1/8/01) (Cinema Village.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANTITRUST
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Union Square, and Waverly.

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT
Film Forum.

QUILLS (11/27/00)
Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.

SAVE THE LAST DANCE
Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.

A TIME FOR DRUNKEN HORSES
Cinema Village.

WHAT WOMEN WANT (12/25/00 & 1/1/01)
Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.

Mondays at Film Forum through April 2, a Marion Davies retrospective.

Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A Liv Ullmann retrospective. All films are in Swedish. Jan. 27 at 2: "Cries and Whispers" (1973, Ingmar Bergman). ♦ Jan. 27 at 4: "The Emigrants" (1972, Jan Troell). ♦ Jan. 28 at "Private Confessions" (1996, Liv Ullmann). ♦ Jan. 28 at 4:30: "Kristin Lavransdatter" (1995, Ullmann).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Through Jan. 31: A tribute to Kino International. Jan. 24 at 7:30: "The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz" (1955, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Jan. 24 at 9:30: "I Vitelloni" (1953, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 25 at 7: "The Baker's Wife" (1938, Marcel Pagnol; in French). ♦ Jan. 25 at 9:45: "Orpheus" (1950, Jean Cocteau; in French). ♦ Jan. 26 at 7: "La Strada" (1954, Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 26 at 9:30: "The Seventh Seal" (1956, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). ♦ Jan. 27 at 2: "The Holy Scrolls," Parts I and II (1971-99, Bruce Baillie). ♦ Jan. 27 at 3:30: "Time Regained" (1999, Raoul Ruiz; in French). ♦ Jan. 27 at 7: "Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors" (1965, Sergei Paradjanov; in Ukrainian). ♦ Jan. 27 at 9:45: "The Wages of Fear" (1953, Henri-Georges Clouzot; in French). ♦ Jan. 28 at 1:30: "Ulysses" (1967, Joseph Strick). ♦ Jan. 28 at 2: "The Holy Scrolls," Parts III and IV (1971-99, Baillie). ♦ Jan. 28 at 4: "Modern Times" (1936, Charles Chaplin). ♦ Jan. 28 at 6: "Solaris" (1972, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Jan. 28 at 9:30: "A King in New York" (1957, Chaplin). ♦ Jan. 29 at 7: "Rashomon" (1951, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 29 at 9: "Ugetsu" (1953, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 30 at 7: "My Name Is Ivan" (1962, Tarkovsky; in Russian). ♦ Jan. 30 at 9: "Eve" (1965, Joseph Losey).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—Jan. 24 at 7:30: "Tess of the Storm Country" (1922, John Robertson; silent). ♦ Jan. 25 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Village of Dreams" (1995, Yoshi Higashi; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Susana" (1950, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Jan. 27 at 2, 5:20, and 8:45: "Rocco and His Brothers" (1960, Luchino Visconti; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 28 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" (1998, Terry Gilliam). ♦ Jan. 29 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Nelly & Monsieur Arnaud" (1995, Claude Sautet; in French). ♦ Jan. 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Hécate" (1981, Daniel Schmid; in French and German). ♦ A five-week retrospective of Krzysztof Kieslowski's "Decalogue." Jan. 26-30 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Episodes 3 and 4" (1987; in Polish).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Jan. 26-30 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Fellini Satyricon" (†). ♦ Through April 2, a Marion Davies retrospective. Jan. 29: "Show People" (†) and "Going Hollywood" (1934, Raoul Walsh).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 30 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Little Thief" (1999, Erick Zonca; in French) and "Alone" (1997, Zonca; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Jan. 30: Recent acquisitions and restorations. Jan. 25 at 2:30: "Umberto D" (1952, Vittorio De Sica). ♦ Jan. 25 at 6 and Jan. 28 at 2: "Pi" (1998, Darren Aronofsky). ♦ Jan. 26 at 2:30 and Jan. 27 at 5: "The Straight Story" (1999, David Lynch). ♦ Jan. 26 at 6 and Jan. 28 at 5: "Buffalo 66" (1998, Vincent Gallo). ♦ Jan. 26 at 8 and Jan. 27 at 2: "The Man Who Laughs" (†). ♦ Jan. 29 at 2:30 and Jan. 30 at 6: "Avalon" (1990, Barry Levinson). ♦ Jan. 29 at 6 and Jan. 30 at 2:30: "Work" (1995, Rachel Reichman). ♦ Through March 23: "The Paths of Resistance," films that offer social criticism. Jan. 25 at 3: "Invisible Adversaries" (1977, Valie Export; in German). ♦ Jan. 26 at 8: "Meantime" (†). ♦ Jan. 28 at 1: "Blazing Saddles" (1974, Mel Brooks). ♦ Jan. 28 at 3: "M*A*S*H" (1970, Robert Altman). ♦ Jan. 28 at 5:15: "One, Two, Three" (1961, Billy Wilder).

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Through Feb. 1: A Billy Dee Williams retrospective. Jan. 26-27: "Mahogany" (1975, Berry Gordy) and "Lady Sings the Blues" (1972, Sidney J. Furie). ♦ Jan. 28-30: "The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings" (1976, John Badham) and "Scott Joplin" (1968, Jeremy Paul Kagan).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Jan. 26-30: "Voyages" (1999, Emmanuel Finkiel).

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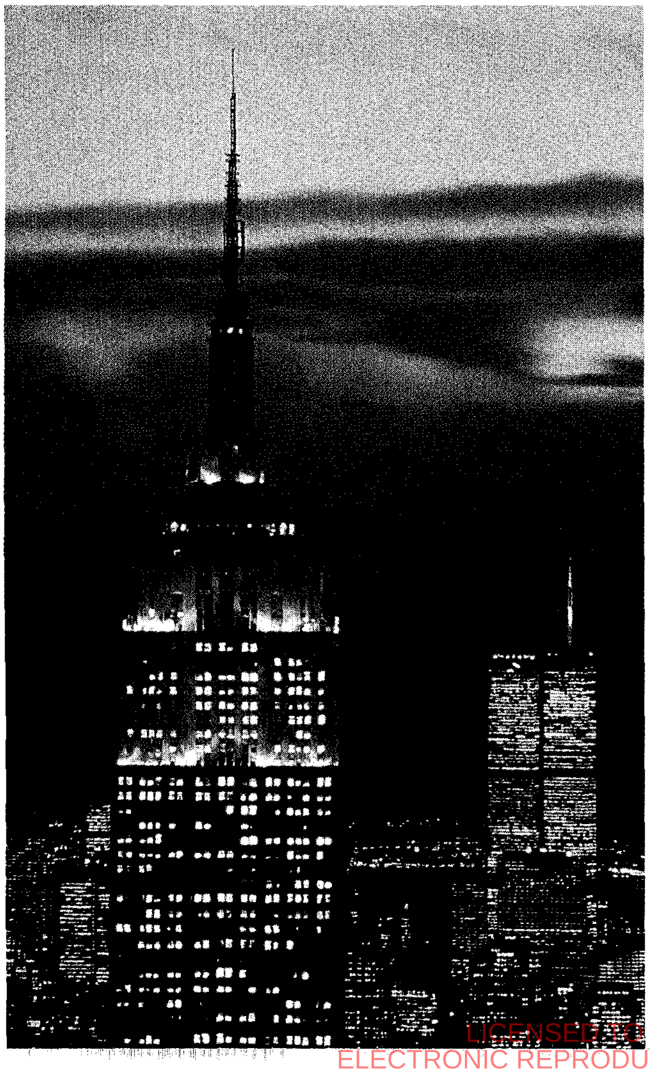

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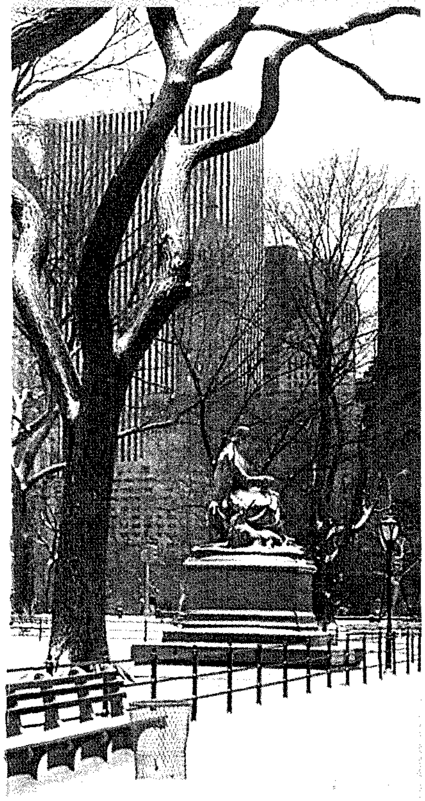
From the stages of the Great White Way to Lincoln Center concert halls, New York's performing arts season is in full swing throughout this winter festival. Special ticket offers and exclusive special events will help you paint the town red any night of the week. Lincoln Center's Great Performers series invites you to experience the extraordinary achievements of classical music in new and illuminating settings. And on Broadway take in *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Cabaret* at Studio 54, *Kiss Me, Kate*, or *The Tale of The Allergist's Wife*, among others.



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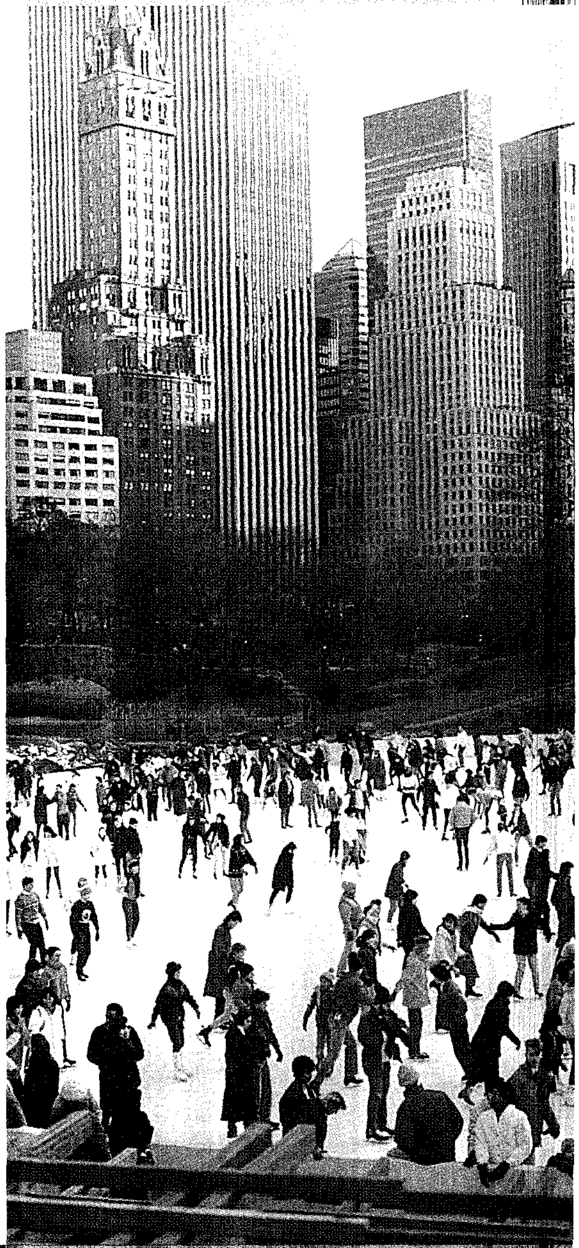
To warm up the sparkling winter nights and provide a striking visual backdrop to the Paint the Town Red celebration, city landmarks will be decked out in red with special lighting and decorations. Red spotlights will transform American Museum of Natural History, Belvedere Castle, The Brooklyn Public Library, City Hall, The Empire State Building, The Grand Army Plaza Monument, Intrepid Sea-Air-Space Museum, the Lincoln Center fountain, Madison Square Garden Center, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Municipal Building, the NASDAQ MarketSite Experience, The New York Public Library, the Queens Unisphere, Snug Harbor Cultural Center, The South Street Seaport Museum, the Staten Island Ferry, The Times Square Panasonic Screen, the U.S. Post Office, Washington Square Arch, and the Whitney Museum.



See you soon!

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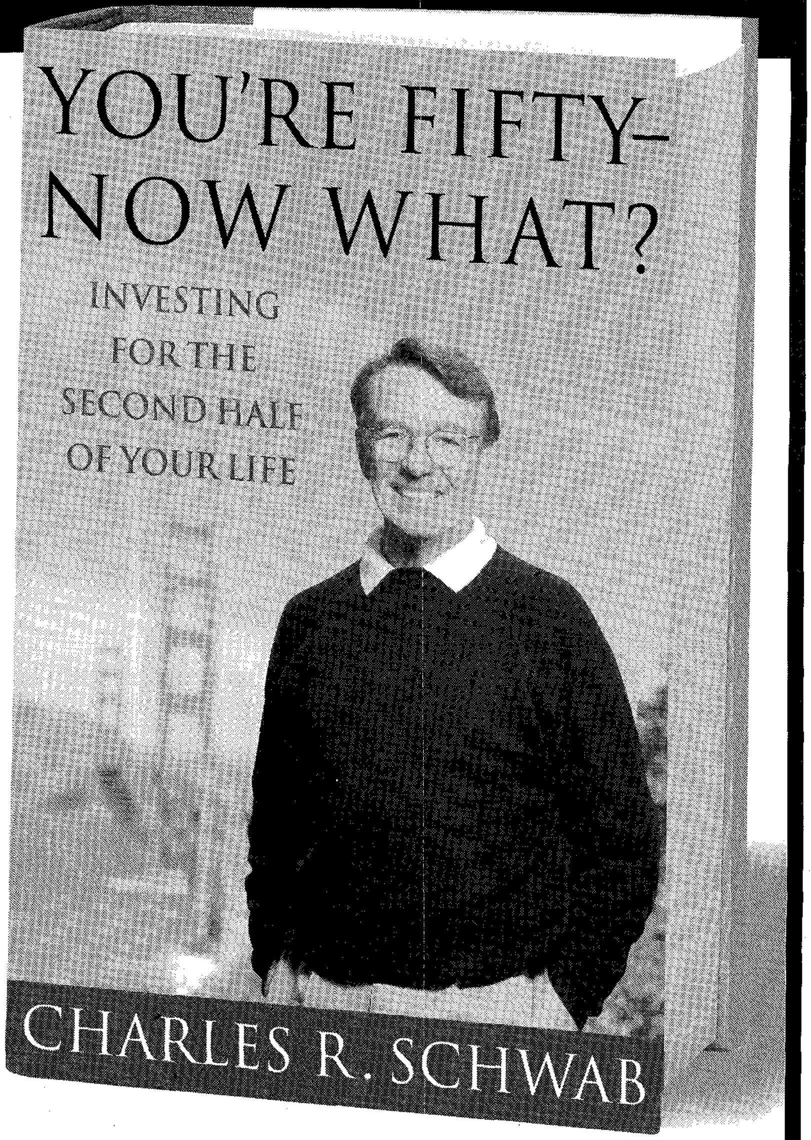

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

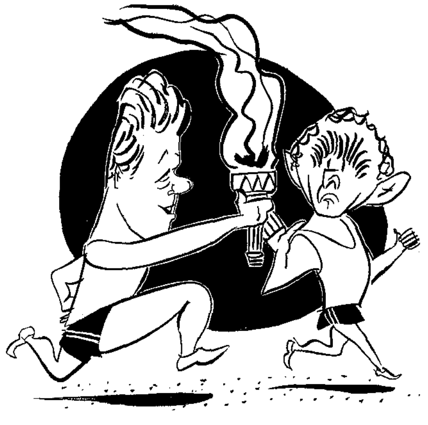
COMMENT
FADE TO BUSH

Bill Clinton is still in the White House as this is written; George W. Bush will have moved in by the time it is read. By long custom and practice, the weekend of a Presidential Inauguration is a cordial interlude, a moment of mellowness—even when it's sandwiched between eras of ill feeling, as this one seems fated to be. And, despite its genealogy as a distant descendant of the Roman triumph, complete with pompous parade, at its heart the Inaugural is, or is supposed to be, a celebration not only of victory but also of continuity—above all, a ritual reaffirmation of democracy itself.

This year's ceremony was bound to be a trifle awkward where both victory and democracy were concerned, given that the one has come at the expense of the other. Bush has no mandate; but that does not mean that he cannot, in time, earn one. After all, as a *Wall Street Journal* editorial proclaimed not long ago, "Mr. Bush won with more popular votes than Bill Clinton ever did. That's a pretty good position from which to lead." (Indeed, Bush received more popular votes than anyone in American history except Ronald Reagan in 1984 and Al Gore in 2000.) In the warm Inaugural spirit, elementary fairness compels the recollection that Clinton, eight years ago, arguably had no mandate, either. His election came with only forty-three per cent of the vote—which is to say that fifty-seven per cent of the electorate, a figure of landslide proportions, did not wish him to be President. Clinton won mainly because an even larger majority, sixty-two per cent—including Ross Perot's voters—wanted to be rid of the first President Bush.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Clinton, both in his first Inaugural Address and in his selection of a Cabinet, blithely ignored the fragility of his mandate. This proved to be a mistake. There are a thousand explanations for the health-care debacle of Clinton's second year. Perhaps the most elegant is that it was a case of what might be called mandate overreaching: there was simply not enough public support, either for Clinton or for a big New Deal-style entitlement, to overcome the sclerosis built into the American legislative process. The rout of the Democrats in the 1994 congressional elections was a direct result of this miscalculation. Clinton's successes were built on shifting, ad-hoc coalitions—purpose-built mandates, differently improvised for different occasions. During the six years that he cohabited with a Republican Congress, he became a political broken-field runner, dodging and weaving toward consistent goals: full employment, lower rates of crime and illegitimacy, a more progressive tax system, greater racial equality, wider access to education, a cleaner environment, and so on.



It remains to be seen whether George W. Bush has learned from his predecessor's shaky start. (His continuing insistence on a giant tax windfall for the wealthy raises doubts.) But one authentic accomplishment can be marked down in the new President's favor: a Cabinet that truly is racially and ethnically inclusive. Bush's is the first-ever Republican Cabinet that doesn't consist overwhelmingly of standard-issue white males. Half its members are, half aren't. Of the fourteen secretary-designates, two are African-Americans, two are of East Asian descent, one is Hispanic, and three are women. (If you're doing the math, Elaine Chao, the Labor Secretary-designate, is a Chinese-American woman.) This compares extremely favorably with Ronald Reagan's first Cabinet, which was twelve-thirteenths S.I.W.M., and also with Bush's father's, which was five-sevenths. (Clinton's first Cabinet remains the one that most "looked like America": only six of its fourteen members were S.I.W.M.s.)

Unlike last August's Republican Convention, with its ghastly pageant of singing, dancing, praying persons of color performing for a sea of complacent Caucasians, the Bush Cabinet is the genuine article, racially and ethnically speaking. It is remarkably free of the taint of tokenism. Colin Powell will be the Cabinet's senior member and the highest-ranking African-American ever to serve in the executive branch. Nor, it appears, will he and his "minority" colleagues be required to actively oppose the interests of the racial and ethnic groups to which they belong. Powell is a passionate supporter of affirmative action and has made plain his intention to implement it within his bureaucratic fief. Rod Paige, the Education Secretary-designate, who is also black, will be in charge of the one area of public policy in which the new President has demonstrated a lively interest.

Of course, the Bush Cabinet displays the limitations of "diversity," too. A great many Americans, black and white, would gladly trade all that polychrome glory for a Secretary of the Interior who had not devoted her career to fighting environmentalism, or an Attorney General who had not expressed admiration for the Confederacy, exploited racial prejudice for political gain, and advocated the criminalization of abortion for victims of rape and incest. African-Americans, for the most part, remain unimpressed, and properly so. But it is not they who require a lesson. The makeup of the Bush Cabinet consolidates the routinization of diversity. It represents a gain for a certain kind of racial and ethnic amity. It will be hard for future Republican Presidents to go back to the twelve-thirteenths rule. In the Inaugural spirit, let credit be given where credit is due.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

OPTICAL DELUSIONS

AL GORE'S HAIR PROBLEM

For two years, John Walter and his sister Catherine have owned an East Village boutique where they manufacture and sell True Mirrors—mirrors of their own invention that produce an actual, not a flipped, image of anyone who looks into them (if you have a dimple in your left cheek, it will appear on the left side of the True Mirror, not on the right, as it would in a normal mirror). The mirror store is only the latest manifestation of John's twenty-year obsession with the question of how a man should part his hair. The Walters believe that, in most cases, a right part sends a gender-confused message and saps a man of his mojo. They like to point out that Clark Kent has a right part and Superman has a left part (at least in the 1978 movie). Right part, zero; left part, hero.

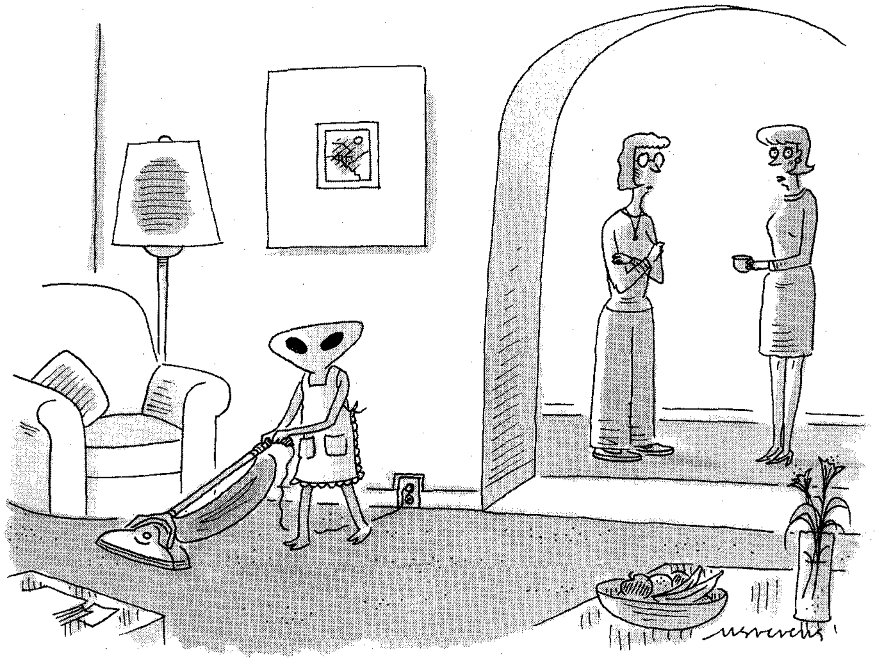
Several years ago, they communicated this information to Al Gore, who wears a right part. He failed to take action. Now the Walters believe that Gore was beaten by George W. Bush because of the way he parts his hair.

The Walter hair-part theory, embellished by years of research, first sprang out of John's experience as a teen-ager. "In my home town, there used to be a group of popular people who would hang out and party," John Walter said last week. "I remember thinking, God, I wish I could be part of that group!" Then, in college, he took a good look at himself in a photograph and saw how he appeared to the rest of the world: "kind of lame," he recalled. He decided it was because he had a right part. He made the change. "The summer after I changed my part, I came home—and about two weeks later found myself in that group. I was completely astonished at how easy it was!"

Instantly, John realized that his discovery could have repercussions for other men who had been gulled by their mirrors into thinking they had sexy left parts when in fact they had wussyish right parts. One of those men was President Jimmy Carter. Walter fired off an urgent letter to the White House, informing the President that his part was a problem. If Carter cared for his legacy, Walter suggested, he should probably change his hair fast.

"I told him that I was like the little girl who told Abraham Lincoln he ought to grow a beard," Walter recalled. He received a hand-typed response from a White House aide, and several weeks later Carter did in fact change his hairdo, bewildering media observers. The Washington *Post* ran an article headlined "A SHIFT AT THE TOP: PRESIDENT CHANGES HAIR STYLE, TRIGGERS SPECULATION." John and Catherine waited breathlessly for an acknowledgment from the President, but it never came. Nonetheless, the Walters believe that Carter's favorable post-Presidential reputation hinges on the alpha-male left part that he has maintained since 1979.

In the fall of 1998, the Walters worked up a formal version of their hair-part theory and sent it, along with a seventeen-page addendum of sociological data, to



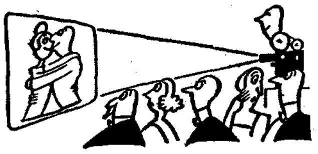
"I hope you're not planning to run for political office in the future."

scores of scholars and journalists. Analyzing the hair styles of hundreds of male politicians and celebrities, they concluded that parting your hair on one side or the other emphasizes the brain activity on that side. So a right-parted guy comes across as a right-brain guy—sensitive, talkative, and soft. A left-parted guy comes across as a left-brain guy—forceful, logical, and gruff. The Walters also point out that only three elected American Presidents had right parts throughout their terms in office, and those three men (James Buchanan, Warren Harding, and Ronald Reagan) aren't exactly Mt. Rushmore material.

As a courtesy to Al Gore, John and Catherine Walter sent him an advance copy of their theory, so that he could take their advice without looking as if he had. "It's kind of sad," Catherine said last week, just before the Bush Inauguration. (Bush, by the way, has a left part.) "Gore didn't respond, and he lost. He is, like, *so* right-part according to our theory." She and her brother even sent him and President Clinton complimentary True Mirrors (they sell for two hundred dollars). Clinton sent them a thank-you note; Gore ignored them.

—*Liesl Schillinger*

THE PICTURES
HARVEY ET JEANNE



Harvey Weinstein and Bob Weinstein, the co-heads of Miramax Films, were made Chevaliers des Arts et des Lettres, together with three other movie specialists, at the French Consulate, on upper Fifth Avenue, the other evening. In the former Whitney mansion, designed by Stanford White, Harvey Weinstein milled about with the other honorees—Robert S. Isaacson, of CUNY-TV; Richard Peña, of Lincoln Center's Film Society; and Jonas Mekas, of Anthology Film Archives—and their guests. Catherine Verret, of the French Film Office, had brought the French actress Jeanne Moreau. Weinstein's guests included his mother, his wife, his three- and five-year-old daughters, and a number of Miramax employees.

"I never got a medal before," said Weinstein, burly and smiling and attired in what looked like his best, though rumpled, blue suit. "I got the Oscar, but the Oscar is not a medal."

"At school, maybe?" someone asked.

"Maybe, can't remember," Weinstein said thoughtfully, and turned to Jeanne Moreau, who looked back at him with her large "Jules et Jim" brown eyes. She was wearing the tiny rosette that is given to recipients of the French Legion of Honor.

"I had the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres previously, and I have also this one," Moreau said in a slow, deep voice, fingering the rosette.

"And she was the first woman to be voted into the French Academy of Fine Arts," Catherine Verret added.

"Have you seen my new film, 'Chocolat'?" Weinstein asked Jeanne Moreau.

"No," she said.

"There's a screening of it tonight," Weinstein said. "I'll have to leave early to make it."

"Paul Newman is hosting the screening," one of his aides said. "In the Woody Allen screening room."

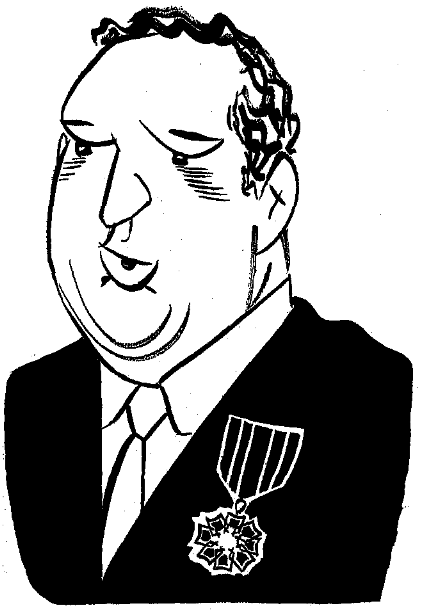
Jeanne Moreau nodded graciously at the names.

"I have something in mind for you," Weinstein said to her. "And you have to see 'Chocolat.' "

"I wish you could come to Paul Newman's screening tonight, in Woody Allen's screening room," another Miramax aide said.

Escorted by Pierre Buhler, the *conseiller culturel*—a sharp-faced, sure-of-himself young man in gray flannels—the honorees and their guests went into a room set up with chairs and a podium for the presentation of the medals. Someone asked him what perks he thought the recipients of the medal would get in France.

"Free meals—just kidding!" a deputy counsellor said, and gave a long laugh at his own joke. Then, at the podium, Buhler got to work, reading from his notes. "Along with *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, a Frenchman will defend to the bitter end good cinema," he said. He called Harvey Weinstein to the podium and said that Weinstein would accept the award for himself and for his brother Bob, who couldn't make it. "Siblings have been most influential in films," the consul said. "It all began with the Lumière brothers . . . then the Marx brothers . . . and the Coen brothers. I don't usually do two at once, but I am happy to make the exception tonight." He talked about the Weinsteins' "keen eye for quality." He called them "star-makers" and "international talent scouts." He stepped closer and on Harvey Weinstein's jacket pinned the medal, which was suspended from a ribbon of white stripes against a green background. He said, "*Au nom du Ministre de la Culture, je vous fais Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.*" He then pulled each side of Weinstein's head in turn against the sides of his own head. No kissing of cheeks—no kissing at all. Both men seemed to be taking precautions against catching a cold.



Harvey Weinstein

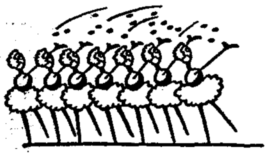
"*Chevalier* means 'knight,' " somebody in the audience said in a loud whisper.

Then Harvey Weinstein spoke. "I love France and French movies. . . . When I was fourteen, I went to see François Truffaut's 'The 400 Blows.' . . . It changed my life. . . . We can protect European culture no matter what." He added, "Any room that has Jeanne Moreau in it is a great room." He gave an Oscar-long list of thank-yous. Then he apologized for having to leave to go to Paul Newman's showing of the movie "Chocolat," in Woody Allen's screening room. His mother and his wife and his little daughters and his aides and helpers arose and decamped, too.

—*Lillian Ross*

THE INAUGURATION

THE ROCKETTES GO SOUTH



All aboard the train to Washington, D.C., and the Inaugural celebration! All aboard, not with businesspeople and their laptops but with twenty-five women who, taken together, could be considered a New York institution, like the Empire State Building, if the Empire State Building were about five feet ten inches tall and had really long legs. All aboard with Becky Downing, who danced in "The Will Rogers Follies," on Broadway; with Eileen Grace, who sometimes dances on cruise ships; with Susan Heart, who teaches Pilates at Power Pilates, on East Fifty-seventh Street, when she's not in America's most famous chorus line. All aboard with Melissa Rae Mahon, who danced in the very last performance of "Cats"; with Michelle Hammar, who dances amid cars at auto shows; with Liz Maurer, who recently moonlighted as David Copperfield's assistant, which doesn't involve much dancing ("I was cut in half and I was transported, and I guess I disappeared a lot," she said). All aboard the 10 A.M. Metroliner, on the day before last Thursday's Inaugural opening gala performance by the stars of Radio City's "Christmas Spectacular." All aboard with the Rockettes!

The Rockettes had a Metroliner car to themselves, and they were spread out and drinking coffee as they raced south through the New Jersey Meadowlands to their big show. To pass the time, they were studying (a course to become a personal trainer), reading ("It's a Chick Thing: Celebrating the Wild Side of Women's Friendship"), and talking on cell phones ("We're dancing for President Bush! I *know!*"). Tara Bradley was showing off pictures of her daughter, who is twenty-two months old, to Jennifer Jones, whose daughter is two. Another Rockette was demonstrating how to turn the train seats around to accommodate four people.

Perhaps in keeping with the theme of the gala, "Bringing America Together," the Rockettes did not participate in a lot of heated political discussion. One Rockette had danced for President Bush's father in a performance of "Victor/Victoria," in Houston, a few years ago, and hoped to meet the new President Bush. Another Rockette, Heather Dee Perry, had danced on numerous occasions for former President Clinton as a member of the Coral Reeferettes, dancers with Jimmy Buffett's band, and had even stayed at the White House overnight, although she could not recall which room she'd slept in. The closest anyone came to partisanship was in a conversation between Michelle Imor and Jennifer Marquardt. Michelle's boyfriend is a native of Austria, and so is Jennifer's husband, and they were comparing notes. ("He didn't know what 'The Dukes of Hazzard' was." . . . "I only have to cook schnitzel once a month." . . . "They maybe have some folk dancing there, but they don't have the big shows.") Somewhere in Maryland, they realized that their Austrian significant others had both supported Al Gore.

Two men were travelling with the women: Bruce Michael, the Rockettes' creative producer, and John Dietrich, their choreographer. They were all business: the Rockette generals preparing for the Rockettes' landing on the beach—the beach, in this case, being the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. It was the first time in the Rockettes' seventy-five-year history that they would dance at an Inaugural event, and Dietrich had decided that they should perform a piece he had arranged entitled "Parade." "Instead of doing something really patriotic, we're doing something more Americana," he said.

At 1 P.M., the Rockettes pulled into Union Station. The bus driver who picked them up cruised through Washington and finagled his way past the pre-Inaugural security on the Mall. "I got the Rockettes," he told a guard. There was only one hour for rehearsal. The first crisis was that the Rockettes' tap shoes wouldn't work on the rubber-padded stage. The second was that there was no dressing room. "We'll have the girls change on the bus," Michael said. In a few minutes, the Rockettes were in their rehearsal sweats and were oohing and aahing at the monument-strewn Washington panorama as a bunch of military officers, standing in for the Presidential entourage, oohed and aahed at them.

"O.K., so listen, you guys, here are all the changes!" Dietrich said, and immediately the Rockettes were at attention. They waited for some fighter planes to fly over and for several Army paratroopers to parachute out over the stage, and then a stand-in for Larry King, who would introduce them in the actual show, said, "The Rockettes!" Dietrich said, "O.K., and bump-da-da- bump-da-da-bump!"

On the first run-through, it looked as if the Rockettes' high kick would knock the musicians over, even though they weren't yet kicking at full power. They did another run-through, after which one of the Bush Inaugural officials (raincoat, cell phone) asked if her mother could pose with a Rockette for a photo. Then the music came up for the final time. When the big kick came, it was really big. A recently landed paratrooper put his video camera on the ground to film them. Michael looked around at the view, and at the Jumbotron screens out on the Mall. "I'm feeling quite moved," he said.

—*Robert Sullivan*

NINE QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK DURING A CO-OP-BOARD INTERVIEW NOW THAT THE REAL-ESTATE MARKET IS DOWN

1. "Sorry I'm an hour late. I didn't keep you waiting, did I?"

2. "How's the water pressure in this building? I have some rather unique needs in that department."

3. "I see you allow dogs. How many?"

4. "Do you guys need to meet my posse before making a final decision?"

5. "Are the doormen discreet?"

6. "Did you hear that? Sh-h-h! There it is again!"

7. "A standard bale of cotton is fifty-five inches wide. But the freight elevator door is only fifty-three inches across. Just what, if I may ask, does the board intend to do about this?"

8. "Is it just me, or do you agree that the city zoning board is coming damn close to playing God in the matter of determining the fine line between a hobby and a business?"

9. "Maybe it's the booze talking, but I'm feeling a lot of love in this room. Neighbors or what?"

—*Mark Golin*

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
THE BRILLIANCE OF BOOKIES

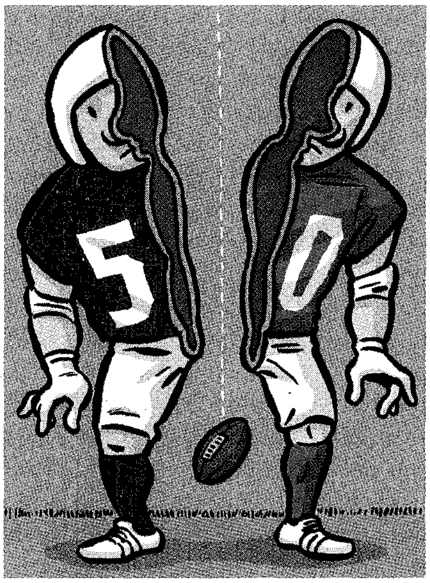
Even before the final whistle sounded on the Baltimore Ravens' 16–3 drubbing of the Oakland Raiders in the A.F.C. championship game the Sunday before last, Robert Walker was hard at work. As the sports-book director for the Mirage Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Walker was getting ready to post a line for the forthcoming Super Bowl, between the Giants and the Ravens. The line—also known as the point spread—indicates to bettors which team is favored to win, and by how many points. The Vegas line winds up in many newspapers and is appropriated by illegal bookies across the country.

Walker is not so much a sports geek as a probability wonk; his job requires him to be as adept as the head of a global derivatives desk at gaming risk. But he does need to know something about football. So he consulted his N.F.L. power ratings and statistical charts, talked over the matchup with a few colleagues, and, as the game ended, settled on a good number, which he posted onscreen in the Mirage's cavernous sports-book arena. Walker's line: Ravens, by 2½ points. In other words, if you were to bet on the Ravens they'd have to win by three points or more for you to win your bet. Bet on the Giants, and they don't even have to win the game—if they lose by two points or less, you still win.

If Vegas were paradise, this is where Walker's work would end. He'd set the spread, light a cigar, then make a killing as the bets poured in. But the game of bookmaking doesn't work that way. Yes, the bets will flood in. About seventy million dollars will be wagered legally, in Vegas, on the Super Bowl; nationwide, as much as four billion will be bet illegally. But, even with all that action, a bookie who hopes to make a dependable profit needs to manage his portfolio of bets with a measure of obsessive vigilance that would put many a Wall Street trader to shame.

The key to that profit is massaging the point spread so that bets keep coming in for both teams. The opening line is set by the bookmaker, but it shifts largely in response to what bettors do—much as stock prices rise and fall with investor demand. Not long after the 2½-point line on the Ravens was posted, for instance, the Mirage booked a couple of early three-thousand-dollar bets on Baltimore. That's not much money, but it was enough to convince Walker that the spread should be raised to three. If everyone wanted to bet on Baltimore, chances were the line wasn't right. So the line moved. As Walker says, "We always get to the right line eventually."

The right line, in this case, is not necessarily one that successfully predicts the outcome of the game; it's one that encourages people to wager as much money on one team as on the other. When they do, a bookie will win half the bets he takes and lose the other half. But here's the trick: the odds on every bet are skewed slightly in the bookie's favor. So he wins a little bit more on his winning bets than he loses on his losing bets. That slim advantage, which is known as the vigorish, or the vig, is all the bookie has going for him. And it can disappear whenever too much money is riding on only one side of the bet. The way the bookie keeps that from happening is by fiddling with the line. "The line we want is the line that'll split the public, because that's when you start earning that vig," Walker says.



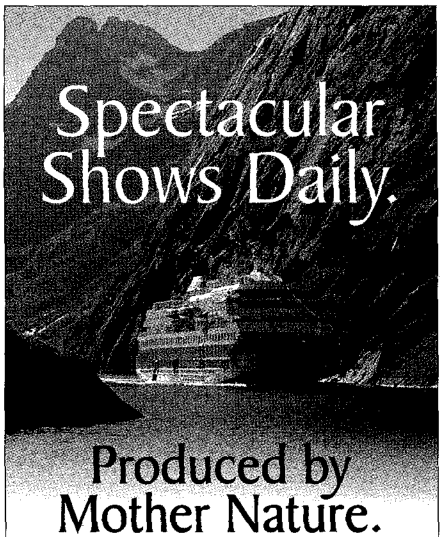
CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

In theory, then, the adjustment of the line would be automatic, so that the spread would rise or fall to compensate for any significant imbalance in the amounts wagered on the two sides. The Mirage could do this, if it chose to; its computerized database tracks the bets as they come in. But in practice the process is quirkier. Bookies have to keep other risks in mind. They dread mathematical anomalies that most fans know nothing about. Ever heard of "getting middled"? Your bookie has nightmares about it. Here's one bad bookie dream: the Ravens are currently favored by three points in the Super Bowl. If the line moves to 3½, many more people will bet on the Giants (since those who wanted to bet on the Ravens would have done so when the line was 2½ or 3). Let's say the Ravens win by three: in that scenario, those Ravens bettors win or tie, those Giants bettors win, and the bookmakers—caught in the middle—get cleaned out. So, unless something drastic happens, Walker isn't budging from his 3-point line, even if that means the action isn't perfectly balanced. "Getting middled is what kills us," he says. "If I had to go to 3½, it'd be like sticking myself in the eye with a needle."

This relentless tinkering—and it is relentless, since the Mirage offers a line on every game, in just about every sport, every day of the year—is dizzying. But it all comes down to minimizing risk. Unlike an illegal bookie, Walker can't lay off risk by moving his customers' bets to a bigger bookie. If he gets caught with too much action on the wrong side, the Mirage pays. And bettors are savvier than ever, thanks to powerful computers and the explosion in sports news. They know how to exploit a point spread that's out of whack.

Of course, Walker, too, has access to computers and ESPN, and also to companies that do nothing but set lines. In the perpetual arms race between the bettors and the bookmakers, the bookies are keeping pace. As a result, lines keep getting more accurate, and the betting market keeps getting more efficient. In the N.F.L., for example, favorites cover the spread in half the games, while underdogs cover in the other half. The spread works! Just as on Wall Street, you can't beat the market in the long run except by chance (or by cheating, of course). The market's wisdom—the collective intelligence of a nation of gamblers—is nearly perfect. Together, bookies and bettors make up a prediction machine that's tough to outsmart—which is probably why Robert Walker is taking bets for a living, rather than making them.

—*James Surowiecki*



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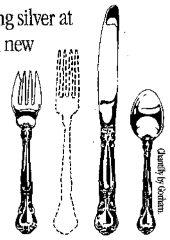

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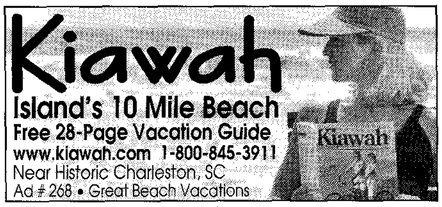

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PERSONAL HISTORY

BETTING YOUR LIFE

When the author's doctors disagreed, she had to choose sides.

BY ALICE STEWART TRILLIN

Jerome Groopman has written in this magazine about the dilemma a doctor faces when giving medical advice that strongly contradicts the diagnosis of another doctor, and about the difficulty of waiting rather than taking swift action in the face of a dire medical situation. He recalled an admonition he heard as a medical student: "Don't just do something—stand there." But what about a patient who has to bet his life on one doctor's best guess against another's, and stands there, waiting to see which way the possibly loaded dice will roll?

In September of 1990, my husband and I took a trip to Istanbul. A few days before we left, I came down with a case of what my internist took to be flu, but not a serious enough case to make me cancel the trip. Yet, after the long plane flight and a few days breathing Istanbul's polluted air, I couldn't stop coughing. Fourteen years earlier, I'd been diagnosed with lung cancer—I was thirty-eight and had never smoked—and had a lobe of my left lung removed, followed by radiation and some chemotherapy. I'd been well since then, and had finally come to believe that this particular cancer probably wouldn't kill me; it certainly didn't occur to me that my cough was anything more than an annoying symptom of the flu. But when, back in New York, I went to see an oncologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center for a checkup, a chest X-ray showed fluid inside the lower lining of each of my lungs—bilateral pleural effusions. The oncologist was worried enough about what this might mean to schedule a needle aspiration of the fluid for the next day.

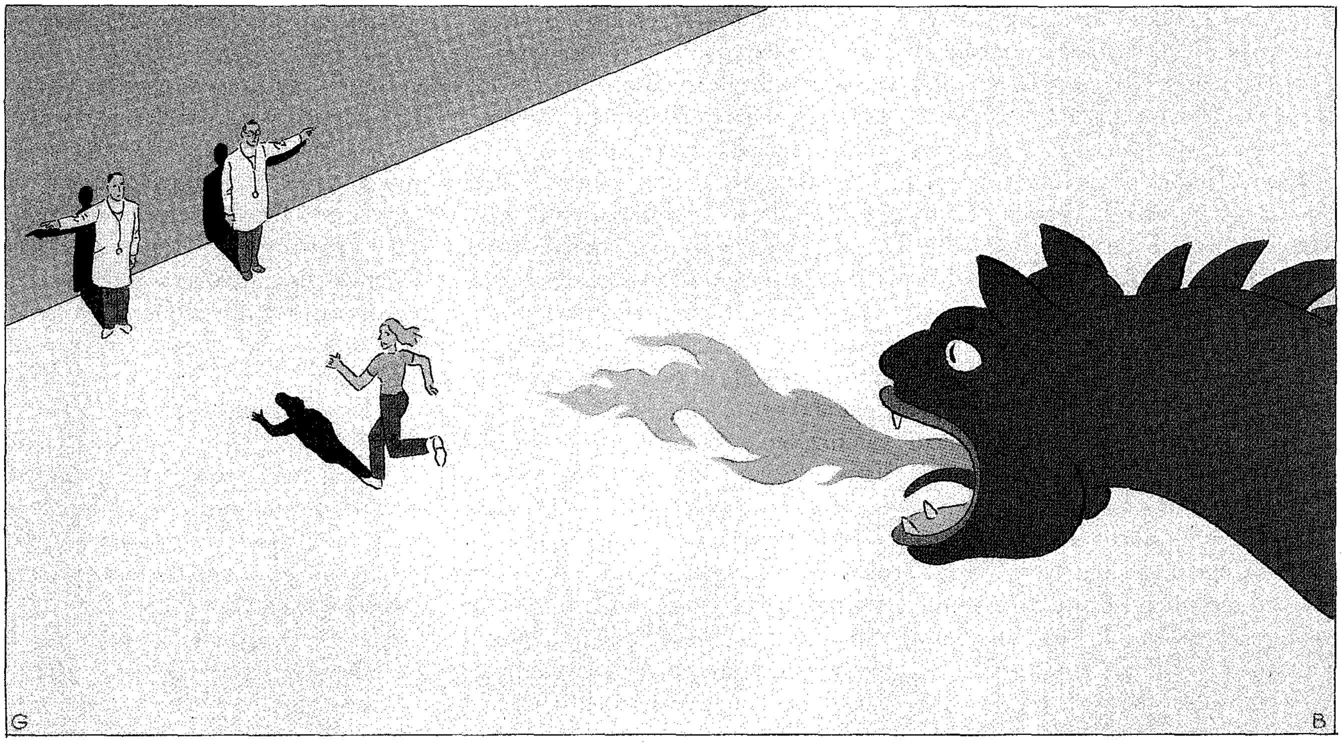
Bending over a table as a doctor inserted a needle into my back to extract some fluid, I started to think about what I would do if a presumably innocent cough turned out to be the sound of the other shoe dropping. I had once had good reason to listen for that other shoe; I'd had malignant lymph nodes in my mediastinum—the middle of my chest—as well as a tumor in my lung. I had always been amazed at how little time I'd spent listening for it, and what I most disliked about having the needle stuck into my back was that it began to awaken what I'd come to think of as the dragon that sleeps inside anyone who has had cancer. I'd written once that we can never kill this dragon, but we go about the business of our daily lives—giving our children breakfast, putting more mulch on our gardens—in the hope that it will stay asleep for a while longer. What I hadn't said was what I'd do if the dragon woke up. But, even as I braced myself for the insertion of the needle, it seemed unlikely that lung cancer, a notoriously aggressive disease, would hang around for so long only to reassert itself in the guise of a cough that interfered with my dreams of seeing the Bosporus.

A biopsy of the fluid showed no suspicious cells. The doctors called it inconclusive, because it could have been a false negative. My two daughters were coming home for the Christmas holidays, so I tried not to think about why I still couldn't stop coughing. Then, early in January, I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my back, which I assumed was a result of irritation caused by the pleural effusions. When it didn't go away, I had another chest X-ray, and that was when the dragon started breathing smoke.

The X-ray, I was told, showed what appeared to be a fracture in one of the vertebrae in my thoracic spine—the part of the spine that lies over the lungs—and soon afterward I got a call from Kathleen Foley, a neurologist at Memorial who had become a friend over the years. My regular oncologist was away, and I had asked Kathy to look at the X-ray. She was concerned about the fracture, and ordered an M.R.I. for the next day. I have come to hate M.R.I.s, and as I lay inside the tomblike steel tube I started, finally, to get really scared.

The M.R.I. looked "funny" to the doctors who read it, and when Kathy called with the results I knew that I was in trouble. When I asked her what the M.R.I. might mean, she was, as always, both gentle and completely honest.

"It might be a tumor. That's what we're most worried about. That's what it looks like to the radiologist."



I'd come to think of cancer as a dragon that sleeps inside anyone. What would I do if it woke up?

GUY BILLOUT

I asked her if it could be anything else.

"Well, yes, it might be a relatively rare infection of the bone, but it's unlikely you'd have that."

"O.K.," I said. "What do we do now?"

She told me, unequivocally, what we were going to do. It was a Friday—does all bad medical news come on Friday?—and she'd already begun to schedule a series of tests, beginning at eight Monday morning. First, I would have a needle biopsy of the suspicious vertebra. Then I'd have a bone scan. By the end of the day, we should know something definitive. We agreed that the best course was to act quickly, because for me not knowing what is going on in my body is far worse than any awful certainty that might be discovered. My imagination can always conjure up images that are scarier than any produced by an X-ray machine. At least, that's what I'd thought until Monday afternoon, when Kathy slapped my bone scan onto the panel above her desk and flipped on the light behind it.

Kathleen Foley is a handsome woman, then in her late forties, slim and graceful, with stylishly cut gray-blond hair. She usually wears the standard female-doctor outfit—white coat over neat blouse, straight skirt, sensible pumps—but she carries it in a way that suggests a closetful of really good clothes at home. Her manner is straightforward and professional, but she laughs easily and lets you know right away that she will listen carefully to everything you say. I had met Kathy following a medical scare not long after my surgery. Looking down to sign a hotel register, I had felt a spasm like an electric current move along my back from the base of my skull to my toes. Every time I repeated the movement, the spasm recurred. That was the other shoe, for sure. (Likely metastatic sites for lung cancer are the brain and the spine.) I spent the week trying not to tell my husband what I thought was happening. When I got home, I was referred to Kathy, as much because my oncologist knew that we would like each other as because she had a reputation as an outstanding young neurologist. I met her on a Monday morning, and by that afternoon she was able to tell me that I had something called Lhermitte's Sign, a not unusual side effect of radiation to the chest.

When I saw her a year later, my best friend was dying of kidney cancer and I, who had never had a headache in my life, suddenly found myself with a pounding pain at the top of my skull. After a "just to rule out the worst" X-ray, Kathy diagnosed tooth grinding as the cause, and told me how tense she had been recently when she was away for too long from her two young boys, who were about the same age as my girls. Years later, one of my daughters and one of her sons found themselves living down the hall from each other at college, and Kathy and I had become good friends.

Kathy said later that she wished she had looked at the bone scan before showing it to me and my husband, and that she would have if she hadn't known me as well as she did. She understood that I wanted to know the truth, but neither she nor I anticipated what it would be like when we all looked at five "lights" that showed up on the bone scan—two in my ribs, two in my hips, and one in my spine.

Each light indicated a possible tumor.

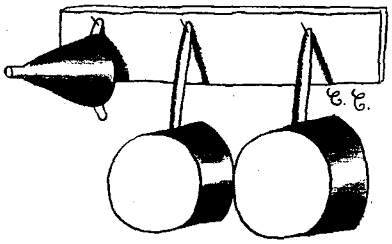
"What do you think it is?" I asked.

She told me that, if she had to guess, she'd say it was a late metastasis to the bone, from my lung cancer. Unlikely, but not impossible. Of course, there might be other explanations, though she couldn't think of any at the time. The important thing, as always, was to move fast, and try not to think too much about what to do if none of the aggressive tactics worked. That's what I'd done fourteen years before—I'd coughed up a tiny blood clot, seen my doctor immediately, and had a lobe of my lung removed ten days later. I didn't have second opinions, I didn't agonize over the decision. That's what I always told the people who called me for advice when they found out they had cancer. Serious medical decisions are not philosophical decisions; X-rays and scans and biopsies are the key; science will tell you what to do.

At eight the next morning, I checked into Memorial's day hospital, a surprisingly pleasant place on the seventeenth floor of an imposing building on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Memorial had terrified me when I first walked in the door, years earlier, but I had somehow come to feel comfortable and safe there. (I began to like the place on that first day, when a young man with no hair—a leukemia patient—asked what was wrong with me. When I mumbled "lung cancer," he smiled and said, "They treat that like the common cold around here.") Kathy came to see me early, and told me that she'd been thinking about my scan and thought there might be some other explanation for what was going on, possibly something having to do with my radiation. I wrote that off as an attempt to cheer me up. The biopsy of the vertebra that I'd had the day before was also inconclusive, so the radiologist spent the morning trying to get a better specimen—one that would show just what kind of tumor might be eating up my spine. I lay on my stomach for most of the morning, moving in and out of a CAT scanner, trying to use techniques I vaguely remembered from natural-childbirth classes to doze through the numerous probes. At the end of the day, we still had no conclusive results, and Kathy scheduled a consultation for me with a neurosurgeon at Memorial. We had to consider the possibility that the only way we would find out what the shadow on my spine meant was to take it out.

I am known among my friends and family as an incorrigible, even ridiculous optimist. I think all optimists fear that one day they will wake up and won't be able to put a hopeful spin on anything ever again. This is what happened to my father, who was known for an optimism that got him through years of bankruptcies and disappointments, and which vanished like dust when my mother had Alzheimer's.

In the days after that bone scan, I couldn't find a hopeful way out of what those lights seemed to tell me. I did manage to imagine uplifting conversations I might have with my daughters about how it was O.K. for me to die this time, as it absolutely had not been when they were four and seven, and I had foreseen their adoring but occasionally absent-minded father getting them the wrong kind of sneakers or losing track of their dental appointments after I was gone. Now one of them was in college, and the other was teaching in California, and I was sure that I had told them everything of importance I knew; they had understood it all and figured out a lot on their own, and were as close to perfect as they could possibly be. Then it occurred to me that neither of them was married yet, and I would hate to miss the weddings and the grandchildren. I speculated about which of my friends I would assign to help them pick out their wedding dresses. Then I cried and decided that I really wanted to stay around, particularly when I started to think about the women who might come after my husband when I was gone. (The best description of this feeling came from my friend Josie Mankewitz Davis, who died young in a traffic accident, and who had said to her husband, years earlier, that if anything happened to her she'd certainly expect him to marry again, particularly because he would need help raising their children. Then she paused for a beat, and added, "Just don't sleep with her!")

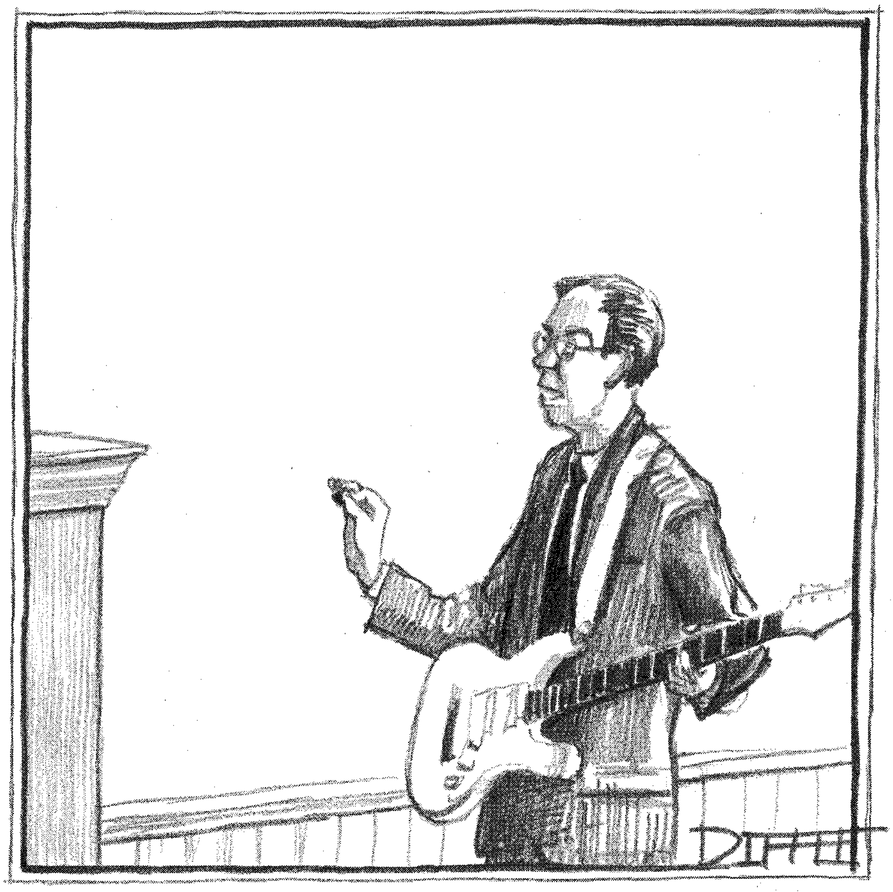


I continued to move fast. I saw the neurosurgeon Kathy had recommended, who looked at the M.R.I. and urged me to have surgery immediately, so that he could remove the suspicious vertebra and replace it with a steel rod. He couldn't be sure that what he saw was cancer, but clearly he suspected that it was. In a year or so, if the tumor hadn't turned out to be malignant, he would operate again and replace the rod with a piece of bone from my leg. Each of these surgeries would involve a thoracotomy—my spine would be reached through a large incision in my chest—because my back was too scarred by radiation to allow a successful incision. In other words, I would be taken apart twice in one year if I was lucky enough not to have cancer, with about a thirty-per-cent chance of infection (because of the extensive radiation scarring) and a chance of permanent damage to my back each time. On the other hand, this course offered certainty; at least, we'd know what was in there. For the first time in my life, the idea of medical certainty had lost its appeal.

Then, three days after the bone scan, I was offered a fragile rope with which I could begin to pull myself out of the tunnel I felt I'd been living in. I was getting an X-ray of a rib where one of the suspicious lights had appeared, in preparation for yet another bone biopsy, when the radiologist hurried into the room and said to me, "Have you fallen lately?" I hadn't, and I asked him why this was relevant; he said that, much to his surprise, the lesion in my rib looked more like a fracture than like a tumor. At that moment, I felt a physical rush—perhaps my recently vanished optimism was flowing back into my body. If this lesion in my rib might not be a tumor, what about the other suspicious bone sites?

Kathy was ecstatic, and together we started planning the next step. I thought of us as a tiny Amazon army, with Kathy as the general, and me following her directions as we looked for reinforcements. First, she sent me to see another neurosurgeon, a famous technician at another hospital. He didn't think it was necessary to examine me, but he told me that even though he couldn't be sure that my M.R.I. revealed cancer, he was sure that my spine would soon collapse if I didn't have surgery. He also said that I should begin wearing a back brace immediately, and take taxis everywhere if I absolutely had to leave the house, because if I fell I might sever my spine and become a paraplegic. Not having seen the radiation scarring, he suggested that he operate as soon as possible, through my back.

Surgery had saved my life once before, and I liked the idea of getting rid of whatever was in my spine. There was nothing more we could learn from the technology of medicine; we had done all the tests that could reasonably be done, and none had given us a definitive answer. Despite the ambiguous X-ray of my rib, the surgeons and the radiologists I'd consulted all agreed that I should act right away. But there had been something unsatisfying about my conversations with them; Kathy and I decided to seek a few more medical opinions before deciding what to do.



"Your Honor, if it please the court I'd like to deliver my opening comments in the form of a Power Ballad."

Most of the many words that have been written about "doctor-patient communication" have come from doctors; there are textbooks devoted to the subject, and communication "competencies" are now taught in a number of medical schools. It would be difficult for me to come up with a list of competencies I look for in a doctor, but I know when I have met one I will trust. Mark Kris, who heads the thoracic-oncology service at Memorial, was this kind of doctor. Kathy sent me to see him for the same reasons I'd been sent to her years before—because he was brilliant, and because she knew I'd like him. The first thing Mark did, after looking at my medical records and having me carefully retell the story of what had happened to me over the past few months, was to give me a thorough examination. This was the first physical I'd had since this drama began; everyone else had just looked at the X-rays and scans. After he finished, he asked me how I felt. It was the only time in these months that anyone had asked me that question.

"I feel fine, except for a pretty severe pain in my back."

"You look really well, too," Mark said. A woman is always happy to hear this, especially from an attractive man, but I took what he said as another attempt to cheer me up.

"Well, I looked pretty good, and felt fine, too, when I had lung cancer," I said.

He looked at me intently. "Yes, but this is different. If you had widely metastasized cancer, as the M.R.I. and scans seem to suggest, you shouldn't feel this well, or look this well, either." This was not a compliment; it was a diagnosis.

"Do you mean you think this might not be cancer?" I asked skeptically.

"I honestly don't know, but I'm not sure that it is, and my advice is that you give this some time, if you can stand it, and see how this develops."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing, or what I was feeling. A very smart doctor was asking me to live with the possibility that I might have five tumors growing in my bones, and to do nothing but wait and watch. The advice went against everything I'd come to believe about acting aggressively to fight cancer. But it made sense to me. I had one more question for Mark.

"What if it is cancer?"

He paused, thinking hard about what to say. "If it is, you will come back to me and I will tell you what we can do. I will also tell you what I think you should do, and then you can make up your mind."

That did it. That was when I knew I would trust this man. He had understood exactly what my question meant. I had been thinking about whether, if I did have metastatic lung cancer, I would do anything at all. Sometimes doctor-patient communication doesn't have to rely on words.

I had one more doctor to see before we made our decision: Joseph Lane, an orthopedist and bone specialist,who practiced at Memorial and at the Hospital for Special Surgery, across the street. He was known both for his brusqueness and for his diagnostic skill, and he saw so many patients that I was prepared for a long wait and a short audience. After spending about five hours in the Memorial waiting room, my husband and I were taken to a small examining room, where I changed into the ubiquitous hospital gown, and we waited some more. Finally, a parade of white coats rushed into the room, led by a short, energetic man whom my husband later described as having the manner of "a salesman for Nobody Beats the Wiz," followed by Kathy Foley, who was carrying my medical records. Dr. Lane reviewed them quickly, and then checked my back and chest for radiation damage, noting a tiny tattoo that marked the focal point of my radiation, just above the fractured vertebra. His words came in bursts: "Nope, this doesn't look like tumor to me. Radiation necrosis—a lot of that now in women radiated for breast cancer. Not so much in lung cancer, not that many live long enough." The white coats dutifully took notes. I had almost lost the ability to speak, but I managed to ask him what he thought I should do. "We'll put you on calcitonin—it works for about eighteen months. You inject yourself three times a week—strengthens the bones. Have an M.R.I. every month or so for a year to see if anything else shows up. Take calcium, and a multivitamin to support the calcium. Nope, definitely not tumor."

My husband spoke for the first time: "You're our favorite doctor so far." All I could think to ask was what kind of vitamin I should take.

Dr. Lane seemed to consider this seriously. "El cheapo is el besto," he answered with a grin, as if he had just closed the deal on a color television.

"O.K.," I said, feeling as if he'd just prescribed a newly discovered monoclonal antibody or breakthrough gene therapy. He wished me good luck and breezed out of the room, followed closely by his disciples. Not exactly a conventional model for the doctor-patient communication textbooks, but effective all the same.

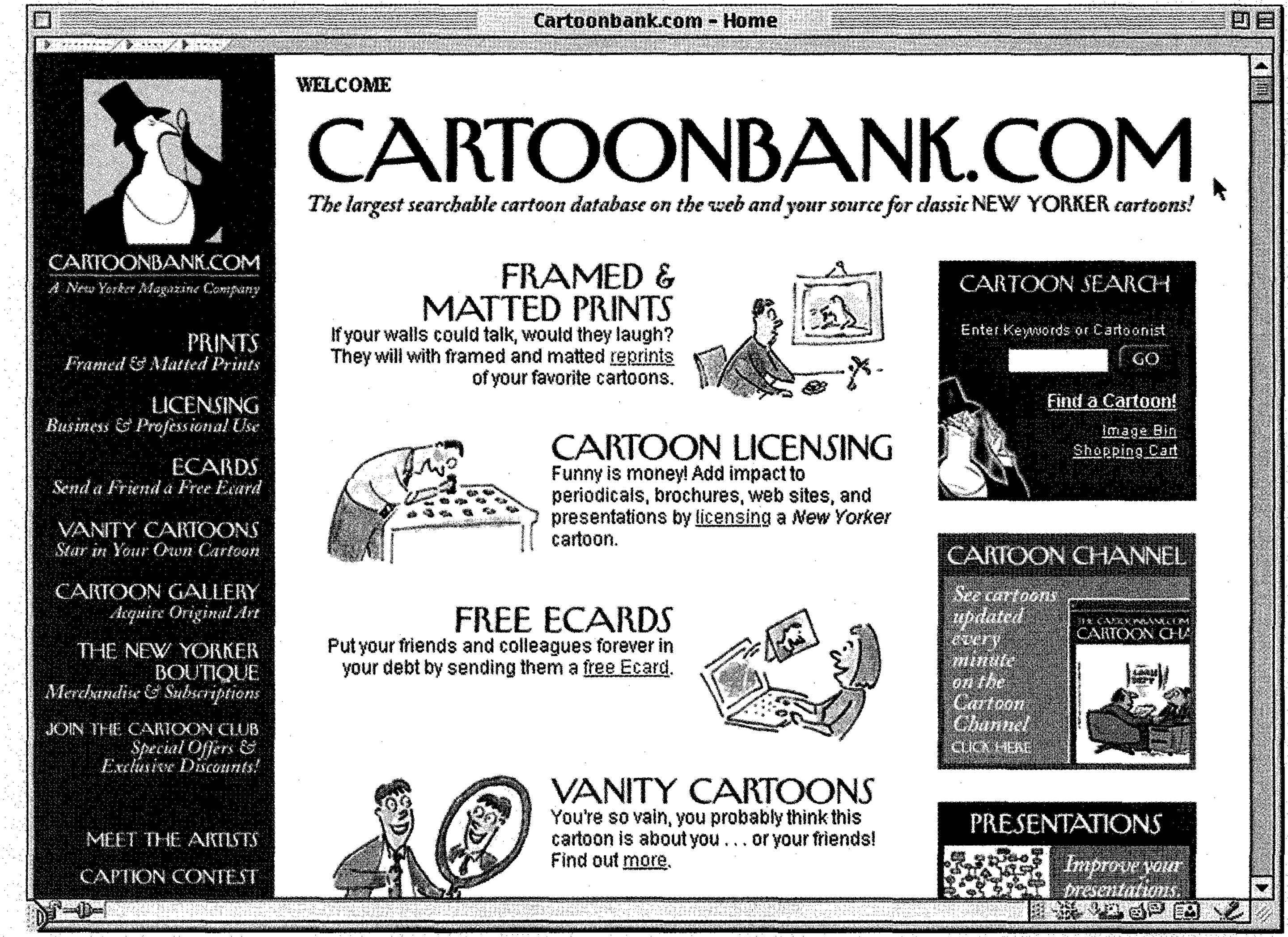
After I got a shot of calcitonin from Dr. Lane's nurse—the first therapeutic action I'd taken since all this began—my husband and I drove home to Greenwich Village, unable to say anything for a while. Then we heard on the radio that the Gulf War seemed to be ending, and we remembered that the lights in my bone scan had shown up on the very day that the fighting in Iraq had begun. Could this be it? Could our own Gulf War end up being, like my Lhermitte's scare of years ago, just part of the price I paid for the five thousand rads of cobalt that may have saved my life? Was this turning out to be not tragedy but farce, with a Nobody Beats the Wiz salesman as the comic deus ex machina?

Jerome Groopman writes that "human biology is too variable to be reduced to mathematical calculation. Intuition would still count, and so would luck." As we drove down the East Side Drive, my husband pointed out that none of the facts—the "mathematical calculations"—had changed since that first terrifying set of test results. All the contradictory advice we'd got had been based on the same information. Why were we now willing to place our bets on Mark Kris and Joseph Lane, and not on the surgeons and the radiologists we had talked to? Naturally, I wanted to believe what Mark Kris and Joseph Lane told me, but it was more than that. I also believed them because I trusted them, and because my own intuitions about what was going on in my body told me they might be right. Although I'm not sure I understood this at the time, I now think I trusted them because they were able to see the mathematical calculations of my case in a wider context than the surgeons and the radiologists had. Mark Kris had seen thousands of patients with lung cancer, and there was something about my symptoms and appearance that made him question the diagnosis of metastatic disease. Similarly, Joseph Lane routinely saw cases of radiation necrosis, and the shadows in my bones were less ominous to him than they had been to others. Even though, like all the other doctors at Memorial, they both saw me as someone who had once had a cancer with a very grim prognosis, they were able to look beyond this prognosis for another cause of my symptoms. And, by providing context, they helped me widen the lens through which I viewed what was happening to me. They gave me the courage to wait. Of course, they might have been wrong.

A year later, it appeared that they hadn't been. It was generally agreed that my vertebra had collapsed as the result of radiation necrosis and probably wouldn't move far enough to sever my spine; my ribs had broken mysteriously, possibly because of violent coughing, but were healing nicely; the lights in my hips probably showed age-related arthritis; and the pleural effusions had been a result of the flu. The dragon had gone back to sleep for a while longer. Almost ten years have passed. One of my daughters got married last summer, and the other will be married in May. I helped them pick out their dresses. ♦

"Don't tell me about busy—I'm on my freaking honeymoon!"

Online Punch Lines!



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

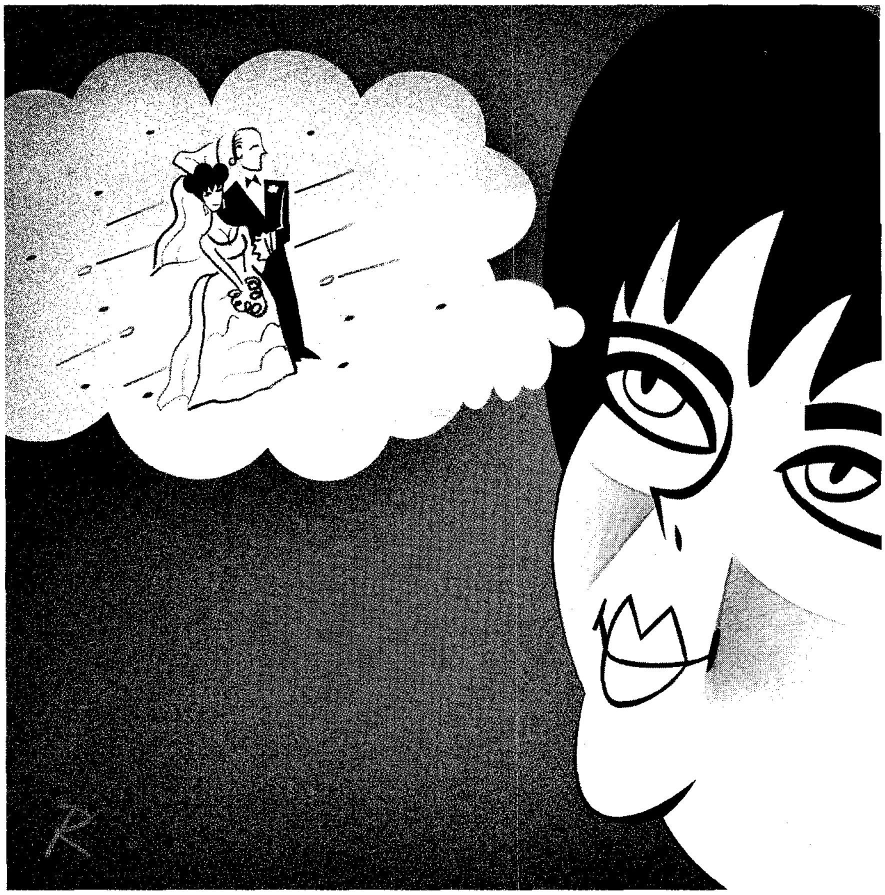
MY WIFE LIZ

BY IAN FRAZIER

In the mid-nineteen-seventies, I was married for a time to the actress Elizabeth Taylor. If this information comes as news to you, join the crowd. Our marriage, though admittedly brief, was quite legal and official; today, however, it remains virtually unknown to the public at large. Ask anyone about Ms. Taylor's husbands and you'll get the usual recitation of Mike Todd and Eddie Fisher and Richard Burton and John Warner and so on, with never a mention of me. Now, I don't care if I'm famous or not, and I have no financial axe to grind. All the same, it hurts to be left out. The feelings Ms. Taylor and I had for each other did not last, it's true; but while we were together we were a part of show-business history every bit as real as any other marriage she had. I have only affection and good memories when I think of Ms. Taylor today. But when I think of how I have been overlooked as one of her husbands, I feel anger, indignation, and a strong desire to see justice done.

Some people say that there should be certain minimum standards you have to meet in order to qualify as an ex-husband of Elizabeth Taylor, and that I (and a few other guys) don't make the grade. Utter garbage! A person would have to be pitifully naïve not to see the fine hand of the distinguished Senator Warner in this power grab. He even tried to ram a law through Congress to that effect, with a lot of legalistic fine print about the length of the marriage in calendar days, number of tabloid articles about the marriage, and so on (all of which favors his own claims, by the way). I regret to say that in California a similar law actually passed the legislature and went into effect in 1999. By its criteria, Larry Fortensky, a husband from the nineteen-nineties, qualifies and I don't. I like Larry, and I respect him as a fellow ex. But all I can say is, look at the facts and do the math: if *he* was married to Elizabeth Taylor, *I* was married to Elizabeth Taylor.

Now, for the record, here is how it was between Liz and me. The year was 1974. I had just got out of college and was living with my parents, and trying to rekindle a relationship with Jayna Mills, my girlfriend from high school. One night I was dialling her number when accidentally I instead called Elizabeth Taylor. With my mind on something else, I happened to dial a number in Beverly Hills which turned out to be hers. I recognized her voice immediately. In those days she had just divorced Richard Burton and was dating the scientist and peace activist Linus Pauling, but he was pretty old, and she had a lot of time on her hands. Why she didn't hang up on me—I was, after all, a wrong number—I'll never know, but somehow we fell into conversation that became warm and familiar after only a few minutes. Not many people know what a wonderful listener Liz can be. Before I realized it, I was telling her everything about Jayna's and my romance, and how she had dumped me for one of the Four Speeds (a local band) while I was off at school. For her part, Liz went into some of the problems she was having with Dr. Pauling, who may have won the Nobel Peace Prize but who was also a complicated person in many ways. I guess neither Liz nor I had really known before how lonely we were. Before we hung up, we exchanged phone numbers and agreed to talk again soon.



ROBERT RISKO

Well, that was the beginning. The very next evening I called her again, and our conversation was even better than the first one. I began calling her almost every single night in a long-distance telephone courtship that continued for months. Liz and I told each other secrets we had never told anybody. Working for Davey Tree Company and living in Ohio, I was, for Liz, a safe listener in whom she could confide her true feelings about the Hollywood world. And for me Liz was—I really can't describe the happiness that Liz was for me.

When the phone bills began to come in, and my parents had a look at them, they were very concerned. I offered to pay the bills myself, even though they took up my whole salary and more. And I tried, the best I could, to explain to my parents about Elizabeth Taylor and me. They were overwhelmed, naturally. They just could not get used to the fact that their son was romancing this famous person every night on their downstairs phone. It was a shaky time for us all. Plus, right around then we started getting a lot of strange calls—hangups, breathing, funny noises—which I cannot prove came from Linus Pauling, though I believe to this day that they did. Finally, my mom and dad, God bless them, decided that if this was what I wanted, then O.K. A customer of Dad's had a condo in Venice, California, and my parents arranged for me to house-sit there for a while and see what happened with this Liz business, since clearly it wasn't going to go away.

Events moved swiftly after my arrival. Liz and I decided we had to be together all the time, and got engaged. The wedding was small—just me, Liz, my folks, Jack Warner, and Liz's longtime friend and publicist, Chen Sam. It took place before a judge in the Orange County Courthouse on December 10, 1974, at two in the afternoon. I find it worse than frustrating that now, through some bureaucratic mixup, the county seems to have lost all record of the marriage. As for my own copy of the marriage certificate, it unfortunately disappeared with many of my other possessions in the sinking of my houseboat during the great Mississippi River floods of 1993.

Item: a photo of Liz and me coming down the courthouse steps; she is wearing a peach-colored suit and a little pink hat, and I am looking off to the side so you can't quite see my face. Item: a note to me, undated—"Dear, The automatic-opener thing on the garage door is stuck or something. Can you get someone to fix? Love always, L." Item: the stubs of a pair of tickets to a rock festival I took Liz to in the early days of our marriage; it was I, in fact, who introduced her to this exciting new music form. How little history leaves us, in the end! The only hard evidence of my marriage to Liz is these random keepsakes I happened to come across recently in the glove compartment of my van. They may not amount to much, but they're precious to me.

My lawyers have them now. I'm told that the more proof I can produce, the better. I regret that lawyers had to become involved, but I don't see that there was any choice. I needed someone to make my case for me; I'm too close to it to do it effectively all alone. Plus, it looks as if we're going to have to pursue this thing on a state-by-state basis, which could be a drawn-out process. On my own I've worked to get more publicity for my cause. I've gone on several radio call-in shows, trying to establish myself in the public's mind as an ex-husband of Elizabeth Taylor. So far I don't know whether it's working. I thought I saw a sign of progress the other day when I noticed a woman I took to be a fan outside my house, apparently stalking me. When I confronted her, however, it turned out she had me confused with somebody else. I didn't get discouraged; I knew when I began the fight that I might be in for a long haul.

You don't go through an experience like mine without learning an important truth or two. Most important, I've come to like who I am. Who I am is a person who evidently was married briefly to Elizabeth Taylor but almost no one will admit it, so he has to get across to a bunch of self-important John Warner types a simple fact that shouldn't be such a big deal making me talk myself hoarse like this. I've learned, also, that that's not such a bad person to be. In general, I am at peace with myself, except when I get mad and carried away. Other than that, I'm always the same. You see, having once been married to Elizabeth Taylor gave me a great gift that no one can take from me: a calm knowledge of something too high and ideal even to have a name. When I can get a majority of the country to begin to accept what I'm saying, I'll be fine. ♦

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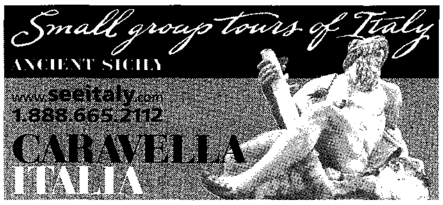
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LETTER FROM LONDON

THE BLUNDERDOME

How could any one building have produced such hostility?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Throughout the month of December, the people of Britain were bombarded by a radio advertisement that made light of what many consider to have been the country’s most embarrassing failure in years. “When your kids ask you one day what the Millennium Experience at the Dome was like, what will you tell them?” a gentle voice began, its echo of Churchill invoking memories of the nation’s finest hour. “So what was it like, Dad?” a child asks. “Tell us about it, Dad,” another chimes in.

“Will you tell them the truth?” the narrator asks ominously.

“Well, the thing is . . . I never actually went,” the sheepish father blurts out. “You never went!” the children bellow in horror. “I know—I’m sorry, I’m sorry.” At this point, the narrator returns. “At the end of December, the Millennium Experience at the Dome is closing forever. Maybe you’ll love it—maybe you won’t. Why not come and decide for yourself, while you still can?”

Last January, Prime Minister Tony Blair christened the Dome, after promising that it would provide “the best day out on Earth,” at the “finest exhibition the world has ever seen.” By December, it had come to this: desperate pleas for attendance, and enough buy-one-get-one-free hucksterism to shame P. T. Barnum. Although the Dome had its conception in the Conservative Government of John Major, it quickly became New Labour’s opportunity and its obsession—a chance to bolster the nation’s confidence and alter the prevailing view of Britain as a country frozen in amber, unable to overcome its long post-colonial decline.

Like Blair’s party itself, the Dome—which, at a cost of more than a billion dollars, was the largest cultural expense in the history of England—was supposed to be about what comes next. “What we were selling was faith in the future of our country and our role in the world,” a member of the Dome’s senior staff, Ben Evans, told me. “It was a kind of self-help motivational notion. It was supposed to make everyone feel great.” Instead, it became a metaphor for political vanity and intellectual mediocrity. Blair and his ministers deliberately chose to put on a populist show, and they were insistent that a “tabloid view of the world” prevail, one of the planners told me. But nothing infuriates the British élite more than a display it perceives as tacky, and the organizers were criticized relentlessly for pandering to families in track suits. In London, the Dome was detested with a fervor that had been reserved “almost exclusively for the leaders of Nazi Germany,” Simon Jenkins, one of its earliest supporters, told me.

“If you talk to the intelligentsia, you will get almost nothing apart from hysteria,” Jenkins, a former editor of the London *Times*, said when I visited him one dreary morning at his home near Regent’s Park. “Many of these people have never even been to the Dome. But that has not in any sense restrained them from discussing the ‘fiasco.’ ” He was right: a surprising number of those who told me how vulgar the Dome was had never taken the fifteen-minute subway ride from central London to see it. “What did you hate most about the place?” I asked a friend shortly after I arrived in London. “Nothing, really,” he replied. “I didn’t go. Who *would* go?”

By 6 P.M. on December 31st, when it finally closed, the exhibition—and all those connected with it—had been drenched in public vitriol. V. S. Naipaul said that Blair’s government was responsible for “destroying the idea of Civilization in this country.” Andrew Lloyd Webber even suggested a modern sort of auto-da-fé. “There is nothing the public likes more than a good blaze,” he wrote last fall. “Torching the Dome would attract a vast crowd, probably in the millions, who could be charged handsomely

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Opening night at the Dome "could not have gone more wrong without loss of life."

ISTVAN BANYAI

to view the conflagration." Long before the Dome was built, Stephen Bayley, its flamboyant and aggressively highbrow creative director, had resigned, because, as he told me, "The Dome never even lived up to Susan Sontag's definition of camp: it was bad to the point of being laughable, but not to the point of actually being enjoyable."

The Dome opened on the Millennial Eve, with a grand soirée for what the British people call "the great and the good." The party quickly secured for itself a place in the annals of public failure, setting the stage for all that followed. A bomb scare (and poor planning) forced thousands of dignitaries to wait for hours at tube stops en route to the event, freezing in their party clothes. At midnight, torches along the Thames were supposed to light up, creating the illusion of a river of fire; the torches failed. "It could not have gone more wrong without loss of life," Evans told me. Jennie Page, the Dome's chief executive, was soon fired—amid publicity more suitable for the arrest of a serial killer, although she had managed to complete the largest construction project in Europe on schedule. Two weeks after the Dome's opening, Prince Charles referred to it as a "monstrous blancmange," and instructed his pilot to fly around it, so that he wouldn't accidentally glimpse it from the window of his plane.

Intrigued by all the animosity, I decided I had better see the place for myself before it closed. How could any building—even one that is the biggest tent in history—have produced such hostility? Could something so thoroughly disgraced have an afterlife, I wondered, or would the government simply rip it down and try to forget? Before I went, I met with many of the people who had been responsible for the Dome's creation. Some of them, after a year of public humiliation, agreed to talk to me only if they remained unnamed. Others wouldn't speak at all. When I called Sir Richard Rogers and his partner Michael Davies, the architects who designed the building, their spokesman laughed. "We are done with the Dome," he told me.

Simon Jenkins flinched when he heard that. "That's just awful," he said. "Richard should be ashamed." Rogers, after all, has designed controversial buildings before: he built the Pompidou Center, in Paris, which was widely loathed when it opened but is now considered a touchstone of the city's life. Since the early nineties, Jenkins had argued vigorously for some sort of national celebration of the millennium. He is one of the London establishment's most flawlessly urbane insiders, yet even he was staggered by the reception the Dome has received—particularly from his friends, colleagues, and clubmates.

The purpose of the Dome was never clear. Yet it failed not so much because it was poorly planned, or even because it was expensive, but because when the government promised that the exhibition would draw twelve million visitors, it set expectations that could never be met. "It was one of the two or three stupidest things I have ever heard," P. Y. Gerbeau, the executive who replaced Jennie Page, told me. Jenkins agreed. "It's a fiasco that you got six million customers, not eight million to twelve million, as had been forecast," he said. "We said we were going to need four hundred and fifty million pounds of lottery funds, and we needed six hundred and thirty million. That's a fiasco." The Dome's financial troubles fuelled the public-relations disaster: it cost about eight hundred million pounds. Income from entrance fees was anemic, and when corporate support fell short of all goals, the financial problem became critical. Several times during the year, management was forced to beg for more money from the Treasury. In September, Blair acknowledged the Dome's failure, admitting that it was a disappointment. "What would have happened if they had planned for six million and aimed it largely at children, and budgeted on that basis?" Jenkins asked rhetorically. "It would have been regarded as a thundering success."

"Go to Liverpool," he continued, "and they will tell you the greatest event of the year was the day our kids went to the Dome. If you ask in Newcastle, the one great outing of the year was the church visit to the Dome. The per-capita subsidy is roughly the same as that of the Opera House, but of course working-class people don't go to the opera; they went to the Dome. Tickets cost twenty pounds, but it still beat most

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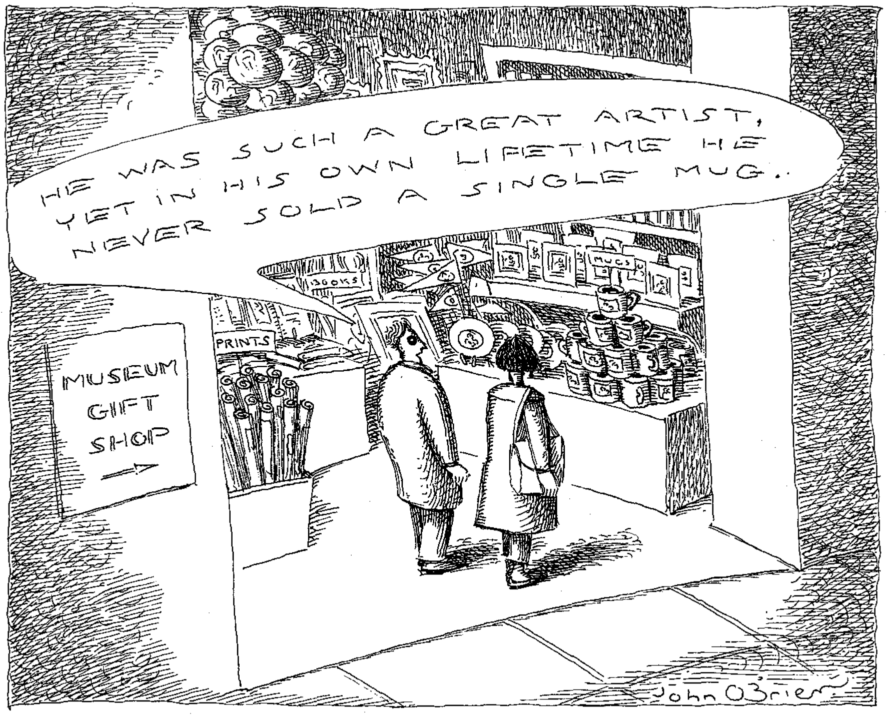
HE WAS SUCH A GREAT ARTIST, YET IN HIS OWN LIFETIME HE NEVER SOLD A SINGLE MUG.
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free attractions in London. Yet we despise it. We despise it because it is not Covent Garden and it is not the Tate Modern. It is not what 'people like us' go to see."

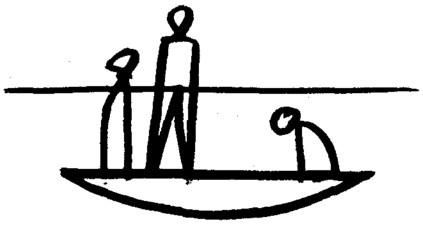
The Millennium Dome sits on a mud flat beside a bend of the Thames at North Greenwich, on an abandoned gasworks beneath which the ground was so contaminated that much of the land had to be sealed in concrete. The site had been derelict for more than twenty years, and all previous attempts to improve it had failed. The building itself is a white circular collection of fiberglass panels coated in Teflon and strung together with forty-five miles of high-tension cables. If the Eiffel Tower (another building put up for an exhibition and detested at the time) were laid on its side, it would fit easily inside the Dome. Twelve canary-yellow masts supporting the building help make it one of two man-made structures said to be visible from outer space. (The other is the Great Wall of China.) Not even the titanium swirls of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim have a more powerful iconic force. The Dome has been variously caricatured as an inverted wok; Blair's overzealous smile; a depth charge; and Mickey Mouse, in grudging tribute to Gerbeau, the highly animated Frenchman who was brought from Euro Disney to save the struggling enterprise when Jennie Page was fired.

In 1996, Michael Heseltine, who was Deputy Prime Minister under John Major, seized upon the idea of using the year 2000 as a way to celebrate the regeneration of Britain. The docks and warehouses of Greenwich, once essential to London, had been abandoned for years, yet the prime meridian provided the city with an unbeatable millennial punch line as "the home of time." A Millennium Commission had been appointed, but it quickly became clear that the body was a politically correct collection of people with little expertise in constructing or running an exhibition of this magnitude. Jenkins, who had served on cultural boards and had written extensively about architecture, was selected after receiving a phone call while he was on holiday in India. "They wanted to know how Welsh I was," he said. "Apparently, Welshness was one of those things that they felt was needed on the commission."

World's Fairs always have a pretext. The Paris Universelle, in 1889, honored the centenary of the French Revolution; the St. Louis fair of 1904 celebrated the Louisiana Purchase; and the New York fair in 1939 was staged for the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the Inauguration of George Washington. But the real purpose is to glorify the city, state, or country hosting the exhibition. Although the Dome was built in celebration of the Millennium, it was also intended to echo two epochal fairs honoring Britain: the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Festival of Britain, which, a century later, celebrated the end of a world at war. The Crystal Palace, which housed the Great Exhibition, displayed the technical and economic dominance of the British Empire at the height of its power; it drew more than six million visitors, and turned a profit that was later used to start what became some of the world's greatest museums, including the Victoria & Albert. "The mix of exhibits was extraordinary," Paul Greenhalgh writes, in "Ephemeral Vistas," an intellectual history of the World's Fairs, "ranging from classical sculpture to giant lumps of coal, from a Nubian Court to wrought iron fireplaces, from steam engines to Indian miniatures."

Yet the Great Exhibition took place in an era without cars, airplanes, Space Mountain, or the World Wide Web, an era that had no multiplex cinemas or laptops. These days, you don't need to travel to marvel at new technologies; people can watch spaceships land on Mars, or "chat" with Micronesia on the Internet. Even so, exhibitions are rarely appreciated while they happen. The Festival of Britain, which is now looked upon with reverence, was so costly and controversial in 1951 that the new Conservative Government demolished its remnants as soon as it had the chance.

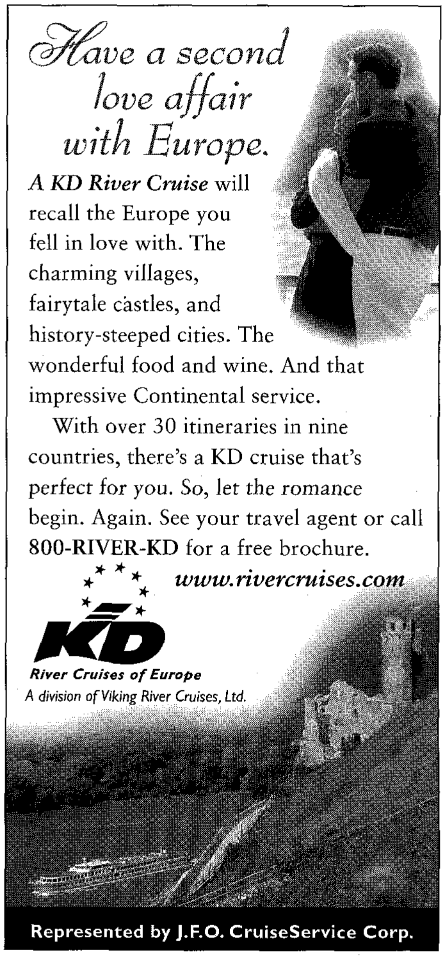
Nonetheless, everything seemed possible for New Labour in 1997. Peace appeared likely in Northern Ireland. The economy was stronger than it had been in years. So, after some hesitation, Blair adopted the Tory plan for a millennial celebration, and expanded upon it immensely. "You have to remember that we won in a landslide, and that very much reflected the mood of the time," Lord Falconer of Thoroton told me when I visited him in his offices at Whitehall. "The decision to go ahead with the Dome reflected the same degree of enthusiasm that led to our election victory."



An old friend of Blair's, Lord Falconer was appointed the minister in charge of the Dome in 1999; almost no week of his tenure passed without one or more of the newspapers attacking his intelligence, his morals, his visage, even his waistline. Not long ago, I saw one headline that said simply, "JUST GO." He is an affable man, but a year of criticism seemed to have shaken his confidence. When we had finished talking, and had tea, he asked, in all seriousness, if I thought he had said anything worthy of quotation or if I would be forced to make something up.

I set out for the Dome early on a crisp, cloudless Saturday in December. I had arranged to visit Gerbeau, the chief executive, who is in his mid-thirties. A former hockey star, he has the body of a fireplug and short, spiky hair; you could easily imagine him as a new Disney character—the Gerbil, which is what the press liked to call him. Nothing about the Dome's *annus horribilis* humiliated the British more completely than the presence of this foreigner, who spoke English with an American accent. The press had set upon him the moment he left Calais, asserting that he was a secondary Disney official who could not possibly handle the pay-per-view disaster area that the Dome had become. His résumé claimed that he had finished business school at the top of his class, but reporters soon uncovered the truth: Gerbeau had come in second, by three-tenths of a point.

The negative press never seemed to defeat him, though, and his honesty, coupled with his obvious skill, helped him become the one man whose reputation was actually enhanced through his association with the Dome. "I am not looking for a knighthood," he told me, smiling and at ease. "I don't give a damn what's going to happen to me in this country, and I don't care what people think. I'm not a politician. I run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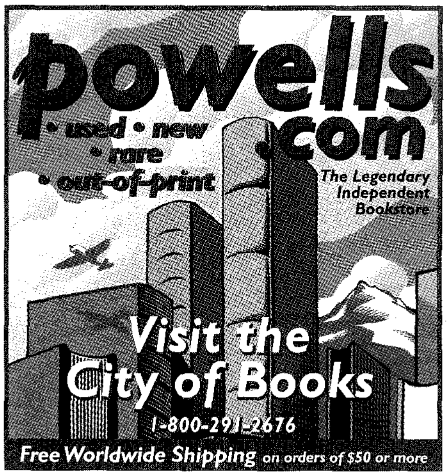
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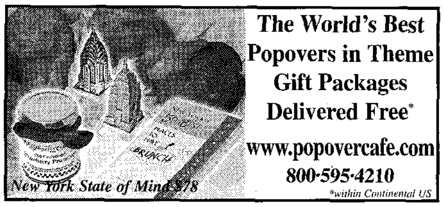

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parks." And he has run this park well. Visitor surveys have shown remarkably high satisfaction ratings. I took my own unscientific poll when I was there; of the dozen people I stopped, not one said that he or she was sorry to have come. "This project started in such arrogance," Gerbeau told me. "But look. There was a World's Fair in Hanover this year. It was a complete disaster. Politicians are involved. Why don't they learn to leave us alone?"

By the time I left Gerbeau's office, the Dome was filling with people. At noon, it was almost unbearably crowded. (It turned out to be one of the year's busiest days, with more than thirty-three thousand visitors—double the usual daily attendance.)

Before the Dome opened, there were vehement debates over each display—its cost, its intellectual foundation, its moral outlook. The Dome was divided into fourteen "zones," which were supposed to represent great swaths of human life, such as work, learning, money, and faith. But there was no controlling vision after Bayley, the original creative director, left, which inevitably led to chaos: some of the exhibits seemed governed completely by the companies that sponsored them; others had no focus at all. Questions put to designers to help stimulate their thoughts were simplistic: "Are we what we eat?," for example, and "Is God dead?"

The zones are laid out as giant pavilions ringing the Dome's interior, and you can wander easily from one zone to another. When I entered, I went straight for the Home Planet, which was supposed to be a tour of Earth for visitors from another world. Like the rest of the Dome, it was a vast corporate advertisement—in this case, for British Airways. To enter the Home Planet, I followed signs for oxygen-breathing life-forms. Flickering strobe lights gave the British Airways "Intergalatwick Spaceport," where my tour of Earth began, a lame disco feel. I was placed, along with about twenty others, in a pod with tinny radio speakers, and the ride started. A voice described Earth as the most heroic of places. As we watched the sort of nature videos most children avoid on Saturday mornings, the kids next to me fought over a toy from a McDonald's Happy Meal, and I learned that, millions of years ago, "life spread across the planet, and now it is a creature with six billion faces and one heart." Anyone with a CD-ROM player (or a child, or both) has probably been more amused for less money by the adventures of Ms. Frizzle and her class on "The Magic School Bus."

On the day I was at the Dome, the lines at the Body zone, which provides a detailed tour of a ninety-foot-high model of the human body, complete with gigantic pubic lice, were too long to brave. The machines at the Money zone, which permit visitors to simulate spending a million pounds, weren't working. But the Play zone was thronged with children thrilled by digital interpretations of classic games—a jigsaw puzzle in which a computer photograph of your face was broken into pieces, a piano that transformed each chord you played into a shimmering pulse of light. I had hoped to try the piano, but, after standing in line for a while, I got tired of stares from kids who didn't see the point of letting adults share their fun, so I left.

Nobody ever quite figured out what the Millennium Dome was about. "It tried to be all things to all men," Michael Jolly, the chairman of the Tussaud's Group, told me. "When does that ever work?" The government never quite figured out how to run it, either. "To my knowledge, no museum professionals were consulted," said Paul Greenhalgh, who, in addition to writing about World's Fairs, served as the head of research at the Victoria & Albert. "There are many very sharp professionals who know how to bring people to exhibits. None of them had anything to do with the Dome."

And, of course, there were other problems: the contaminated site, which did not present an appealing image; Blair's magnanimous gesture of giving away a million free tickets to British schoolchildren; the Greenwich local council's insistence that cars be prohibited in the area near the Dome, which meant that some travellers would have to drive to London (or take a bus or a train) only to then get on a tube—an uninviting prospect. (For residents of London, that was fine: a new subway line, the Jubilee, had been constructed in time for the millennium; it was beautiful and easy to use.) The euro plunged, and there has rarely been a better time for British citizens to travel overseas, or a worse year for Europeans to go to Britain. Even the weather

PET
Victoria Roberts

"Do you have this in a cat?"

played a pernicious role. Last year ranked as one of England's wettest in three centuries; the constant rain helped provoke chaos on the railways, which, along with a fuel crisis, deterred thousands from trying to get to Greenwich.

With help from Scotland Yard's Flying Squad, the Dome reached its nadir one morning in November: as stunned visitors looked on, four jewel thieves, wearing gas masks, wielding nail guns, and throwing smoke bombs, pushed their way through the security barrier outside the building in an attempt either to steal the Millennium Star—the world's biggest flawless diamond—or, perhaps, to replay the opening scene of the Dome-based Bond film, "The World Is Not Enough." The press was ecstatic. The *Sun's* front-page headline summed up the hapless year: "I'M ONLY HERE FOR DE BEERS."

The Year of the Dome has been judged a complete failure. Yet is that entirely fair? In the end, 5.4 million paying customers made it to the Dome. Another million came for free. To put that into perspective, the Tussaud's Group runs the top-two paid attractions in England—Alton Towers theme park and Madame Tussaud's—and it also manages, for British Airways, the London Eye, a high-tech Ferris wheel on the south bank of the Thames. Ticket sales for the three attractions combined reached eight million last year. (Alton Towers, which was the most-visited paid attraction in the United Kingdom in 1999, had fewer than half as many visitors as the Dome.) "Except for five or six attractions in the world," Michael Jolly of Tussaud's told me, "most places would give their eyeteeth to draw six million paying customers."

Does anybody remember that St. Louis was practically made bankrupt by the 1904 World's Fair, which established the city as the gateway to the western half of the United States? Or that Expo '67 was a short-term fiscal disaster for the city of Montreal—which then grew rapidly, as a result of the publicity and all the new building? Upon assuming the presidency of the World's Fair in New York City, in 1964, Robert Moses wrote that although he wanted to create pleasant memories for the fair's visitors, "what finally remains in the ground when the pageant has faded . . . is of more concern to the next generation than any spectacle, however gorgeous."

The Dome had a disastrous year. But its past will almost certainly be judged by its future—as is true of the Festival of Britain. If the fine new subway and the billion dollars that have been invested in a desolate part of London help make it a vibrant place, then the mediocre exhibits will, in time, be forgotten. A toxic dump in one of the world's biggest cities will have become habitable and accessible. What will happen to the Dome itself is not yet clear. Gerbeau, who has expressed an interest in buying the building, suggests that it be turned into a concert venue. Stephen Bayley told me that "what they really ought to do is pull it down."

The latest in a string of potential buyers, a developer named Robert Bourne, has donated extensively to the Labour Party, and has been accused of receiving preferential treatment from political friends. "I went to see the structure of the Dome going up, and I thought, This is absolutely unbelievable—an icon building," Bourne said earlier this month. In February, the contents of the Dome are to be sold at auction. By then, New Labour hopes to sign a deal with Bourne's development group for a hundred and twenty-five million pounds. (Bourne won't pay or get the property until June, which means that Tony Blair will still have to answer for the Dome's perceived failure when he hits the campaign trail this spring.) Bourne has talked about turning the Dome into a business park for the New Economy, something he calls a Knowledge City—a Silicon Alley for London. His timing couldn't be more unfortunate, though, with dot-coms closing by the dozen. Bourne has spoken of replacing some of the tent's panels with transparent material, so that thousands of trees can be planted beneath it, and of building luxury housing along the waterfront. "Come back in two years, five years, ten years, and you will see a hugely transformed peninsula," Lord Falconer told me hopefully. Jenkins put it differently. "Half the Dome was 2000, and the other half is the rest of life," he said. "I say it's time to get on with the rest of life." ♦

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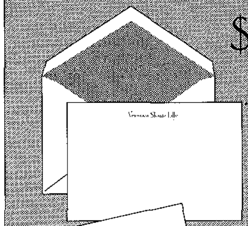

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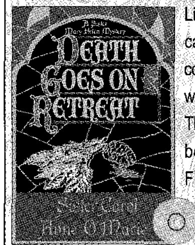

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ARAFAT'S GIFT

The return of Ariel Sharon.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

I—THE BULLDOZER

Sycamore Farm, which is said to be the largest private farm in Israel, comprises a thousand acres of citrus groves and grazing land near the desert town of Sederot. It is the home of Ariel (Arik) Sharon, the retired major general and, if the polls are to be trusted, Israel's next Prime Minister. One afternoon, he took me on a tour. We stepped out of the main house, a spare, white stucco building, and got into a dirt-smeared four-by-four. Sharon drove. A second truck followed, filled with plainclothesmen from the Shabak, Israel's internal security service, who carried Uzis. Sharon is Israel's most polarizing public figure; he goes nowhere unprotected, not even to the sheep pens downwind from his house.

It was a cold day: the sky was ash gray, and the wind whipped up from the desert. Sharon, who wore a flannel shirt and jeans, was in a fine mood; he seems to take joy in his land, though the hard physical labor of farming is left to a group of workers imported from Thailand. (Like many Israelis, he has not given permanent employment to Palestinians for several years.) He talked about the price of cattle. "Ranchers always think they're getting too little," he said. As we drove past a stand of orange trees, he remarked, "Sometimes you can hear the jackals howling from here."

The farm is hilly, and at several spots the dirt tracks descend steeply into the wadis, or dry gulches, that cut across the land. As we approached the drops, Sharon didn't brake but pressed on the accelerator. At one point, we bounced so hard that he hit his head against the roof. The Shabak truck behind us fought to keep pace.

Eventually, he pulled up by a grove of clementine trees, opened the door, and eased himself down. Sharon is very large—shorter than one imagines, but mountainous; his head is small, and his body flares out beneath it. (His appetite is legendary: before the tour, while we talked in his kitchen, he ate an entire tube of Pringles potato chips.) His hair is white, and his skin is marked with liver spots, but at seventy-two he is still a vital man. He walks as if he doesn't feel his own weight.

In the citrus grove, he picked a clementine off a tree and cut it open with a small knife. "This is Zionism," he said, gesturing to his trees. "Farming the land, holding the land, is Zionism."

It was a performance, but a performance deeply felt. Sharon's philosophy is not complicated. "Zionism is physical," he said. "It means that we defend ourselves and our land. And if we leave"—surrender—"a part of our land, we should do it only if it is in our best interests."

There are just two men still prominent in public life here who can claim a direct connection to the founders of the modern Jewish state: Sharon and Shimon Peres, the former Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Both were protégés of David Ben-Gurion, the George Washington of Israel, and both began their careers as security hawks: in the first years of statehood, Sharon was the Israeli Army's preëminent commando, and Peres is the father of Israel's nuclear-weapons program. Over the past ten or fifteen years, though, Peres's beliefs have shifted; today, he envisions a "new Middle East," a borderless place organized not along the principles of blood and tribe but around high technology and free trade. Sharon, on the other hand, maintains his belief in the efficacy of high

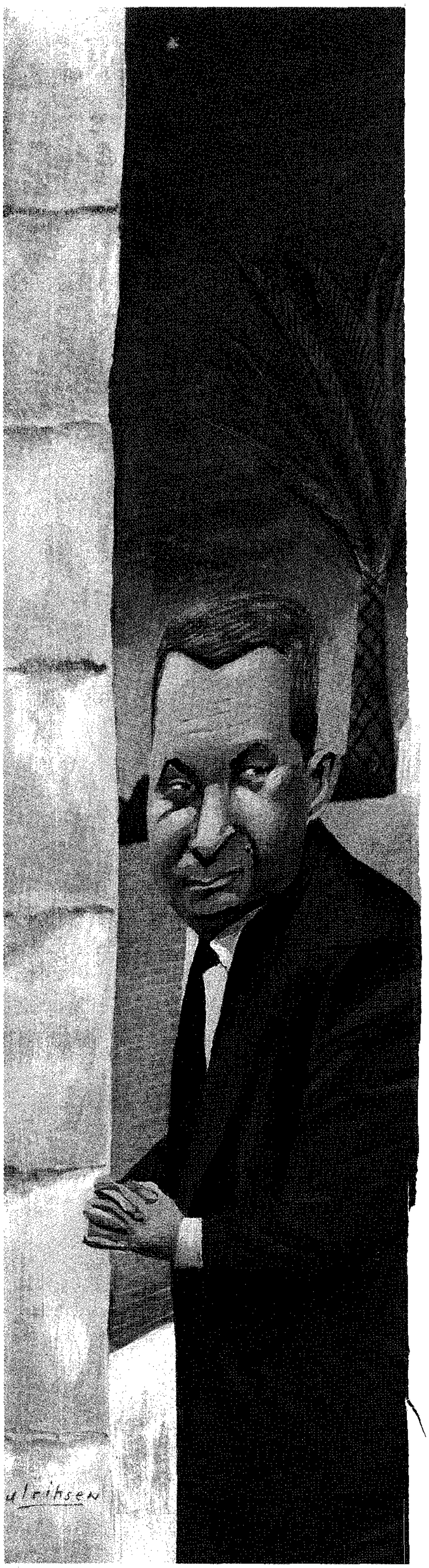
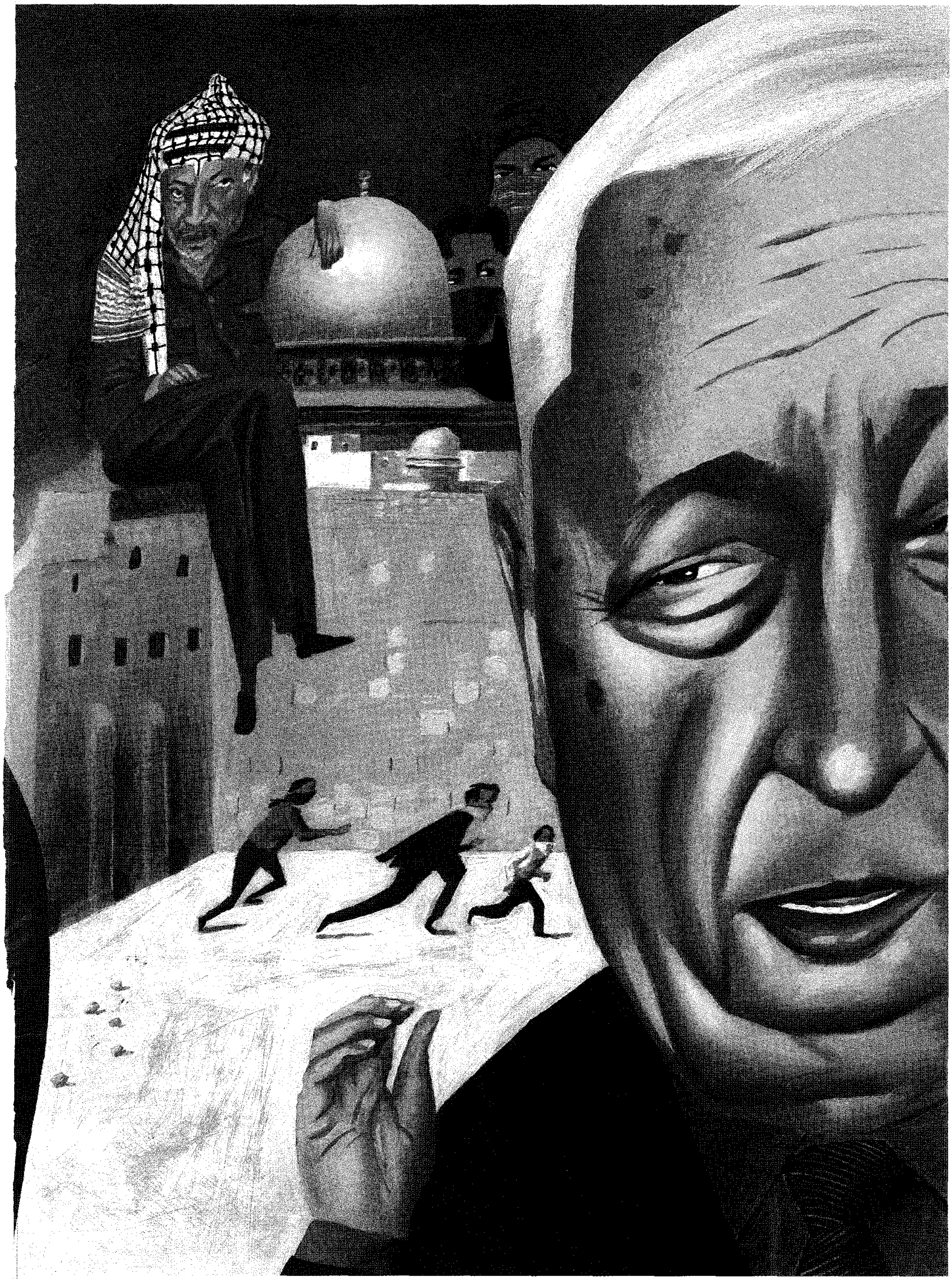
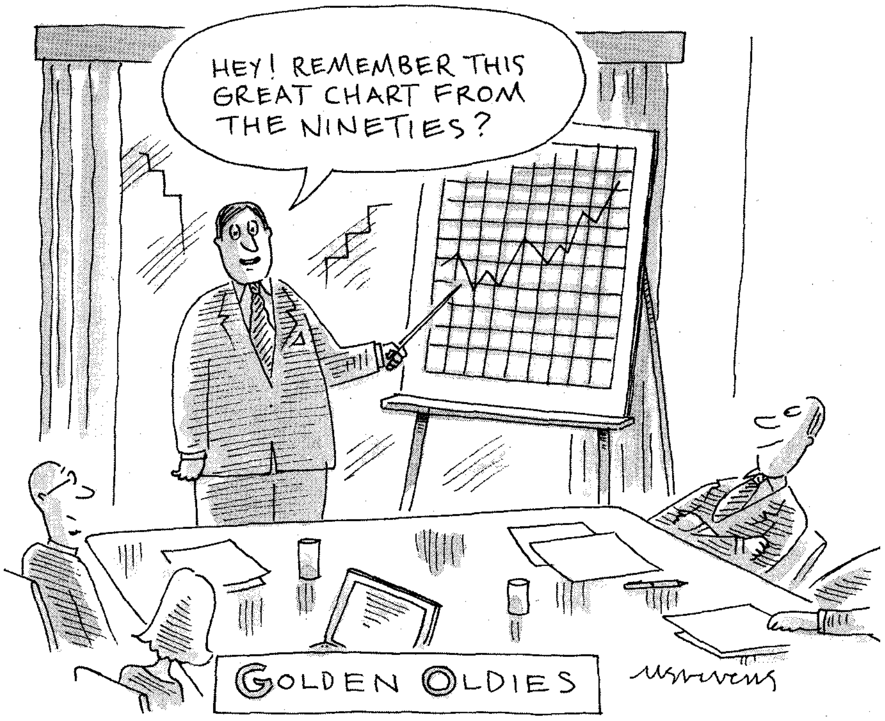


ILLUSTRATION BY MARK ULRIKSEN

Sharon believes that if he succeeds Barak as Israel's leader the Palestinians will fall into line. "They know what I've been doing all those years. . . . And I know them."




HEY! REMEMBER THIS GREAT CHART FROM THE NINETIES?
GOLDEN OLDIES

walls; if anything, he wants to top them with razor wire, not tear them down.

Until last fall, Sharon's view was not popular among Israelis, many of whom believed that the Palestinian people were inexorably reconciling themselves to the reality of Israel's existence. In 1993, after secret negotiations in Oslo, Yasir Arafat shook hands with the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on the lawn of the White House, and forswore the use of violence as a political tool. The Oslo process was structured so that the easier issues were dealt with first: soon after the signing, Israel granted to the newly created Palestinian Authority autonomy over much of Gaza, which most Israelis—particularly those who served as Army reservists there—could not wait to be rid of. The most difficult issues—the disposition of Jerusalem, the status of Palestinian refugees—would be postponed until the end of the process, after several years of confidence building.

The process moved in fits and starts—its low moment came in 1995, when Rabin was assassinated—but by the time his spiritual heir, Ehud Barak, was elected Prime Minister, less than two years ago, it seemed likely that the hundred-year war between Arab and Jew might be coming to an orderly close. At the Camp David summit last July, Barak proposed giving the Palestinians their own state, which reportedly would occupy not only Gaza but about ninety per cent of the West Bank. And Barak, by many accounts, was ready to give up Israeli sovereignty over much of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount. For the first time in Israeli history—for the first time in Jewish history, in fact—a Jewish leader volunteered to cede parts of Jerusalem to his enemy. But Arafat rejected the plan, and left Camp David without making a counteroffer.

Then, in Jerusalem on September 28th, Sharon and several prominent fellow-members of the opposition Likud Party, in a highly public and provocative act, walked up a stone ramp and entered the Temple Mount. It is a roughly thirty-five-acre man-made plateau situated at the southeastern corner of Jerusalem's walled Old City. In Biblical times, the First and Second Jewish Temples stood there, but today the surface is entirely Muslim: the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem's most recognizable landmark, sits near its center, and the cavernous al-Aqsa mosque anchors its southern end. Muslims refer to the Mount as the Noble Sanctuary; the Prophet Muhammad is said to have ascended to Heaven from a large rock that the Dome now encloses. Jewish tradition holds that the Mount was built over the spot where Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, and where the high priest of the Jews spoke aloud the ineffable name of God, on the Day of Atonement. An exposed retaining wall of the plateau—the Western Wall, which is sometimes referred to as the Wailing Wall—is Judaism's holiest site, but it is sacred only because of its relation to the Second Temple, which it once surrounded.

Jews don't ordinarily visit the top of the Mount; rabbinical rulings forbid it. The Mount is not a site of Jewish prayer but the object of Jewish prayer. Administratively, the Mount remains under the control of a Muslim trust, which is in turn controlled by the Palestinian Authority, but the Israelis handle security matters. The only Jews generally authorized to be on the Mount are policemen.

Sharon's critics ascribe various motives to his visit. Some say it was calculated to upstage his Likud Party rival, the former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Sharon himself told me that he was simply gathering facts. For years, archeologists have complained, with good reason, that the Muslim trust is gradually removing evidence of the Jewish religious presence on the Mount. "I wanted to see if the Arabs were really destroying the remains of the Temple," Sharon said. To many Israelis, it looked as if he wanted to assert the Jewish claim to the Mount at a time when it was feared that Ehud Barak was ready to cede it to the Palestinians.

When I asked Sharon what information he had gathered in the course of the visit—he is not an archeologist—he didn't have much to say. He finally remarked, "You know, there was a disruption when I was up there."

As Sharon made his way around the Mount, guarded by hundreds of Israeli policemen and soldiers, Muslims began screaming epithets. He was confronted, too, by several Arab members of the Knesset, or parliament, who had come forward specifically to challenge him. The next day, riots broke out atop the Mount, across the West Bank and Gaza, and, soon after, in Arab areas of Israel proper. It was the beginning of what came to be known as the al-Aqsa Intifada.

Israelis were split: even those who consider Sharon distasteful and his timing terrible found it difficult to condemn a Jew for visiting a Jewish holy place. The rest of the world had no trouble turning against Sharon: he was accused of making an incendiary gesture at a moment of extreme delicacy in the Middle East peace process.

As the riots entered their second week, however, it began to appear that the uprising couldn't be explained away by Sharon's walkabout. "The explosion would have happened anyway," Marwan Barghouti, the Palestinian leader of the uprising on the West Bank, told me recently. "It was necessary in order to protect Palestinian rights. But Sharon provided a good excuse. He is a hated man."

When I first began following Sharon around Israel last fall, he was not yet a candidate for Prime Minister. He was chairman of the Likud Party, but he was perceived to be a caretaker, keeping the seat warm until Netanyahu returned to politics. Then, in December, in the crisis atmosphere of the uprising, Prime Minister Barak, who had earlier lost his parliamentary majority, suddenly resigned his post, forcing the snap election that is scheduled to take place on February 6th. Barak did this, it seems, to thwart Netanyahu's return. Netanyahu ultimately chose not to run, leaving Sharon as the foremost right-wing candidate to face Barak. Until Barak's maneuver, Sharon had no reasonable expectation of ever becoming Prime Minister.

Perhaps because of this, Sharon felt free to speak to me in blunt terms about what he sees as the pipe dream of peace, and about Islam, which he sees as Judaism's implacable foe.

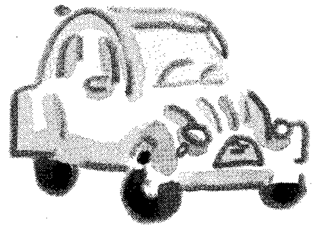
"You know, the Koran doesn't mention Jerusalem once," he told me, in defense of the Jewish claim to the city. "In the Bible it is mentioned six hundred and seventy-six times. Muhammad was never in Jerusalem. When the Muslims occupied Jerusalem, it was seven years after Muhammad's death. They say he came here and went to Heaven. Yeah—seven years after he died. You know, when the Jews pray, all over the world, they face the Temple Mount. When an Arab prays, he prays to Mecca. Even when an Arab is on the Mount, his back is to it. Also some of his lower parts."

I asked Sharon about the extraordinary rage his name provokes among Arabs. He said, "They hate me because I've had a major role in saving Israel every time it was in trouble."

Sharon was born in a communal farming village north of Tel Aviv, the son of Russian immigrants to Palestine. While still in his teens, he joined the Haganah, the Jewish self-defense organization, and by the time of Israel's War of Independence he was already, at twenty, a platoon commander. In the early nineteen-fifties, he led Unit 101, a commando squad staffed largely by cowboys like him. Unit 101 carried out raids against Jordanian villages suspected of harboring Palestinian guerrillas, and he gained a reputation as a commander who would repeatedly escalate confrontations with the Arabs. In one raid, on the Jordanian village of Qibbiya, he and his men destroyed more than forty houses and killed sixty-nine people, including women and children.

In the 1956 war against Egypt, Sharon was once again accused by his superiors of exceeding his orders—by provoking an Egyptian attack at the Mitla Pass when his orders were to avoid contact. As a result, his advancement within the Army was thwarted for several years. Yitzhak Rabin, who became the Army chief of staff in 1964, gave him his first significant command, and three years later, in the Six-Day War, Sharon waged a brilliantly successful tank attack against the Egyptians at Abu Ageila. In 1970, he was called upon by the Army to combat terrorist cells in the Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel after the war, and he did so, brutally and effectively.

In the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Sharon was once again cast as the hero, after leading a tank force across the Suez Canal, to within striking distance of Cairo. He left the Army soon after, but he was not finished making war. Four years later, he joined Menachem Begin's right-wing government as Minister of Agriculture. The fact that he owned an enormous farm in Israel—financed in part with a loan from the Hollywood mogul Meshulam Riklis—drew criticism, but Sharon wasn't particularly interested in farm price supports. His real job was to oversee the building of new Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, settlements that would make it difficult for any future government to return these lands to Arab control. He built these settlements with alacrity—he earned the nickname Bulldozer—and today they are strewn across the West Bank, many of them looming over Palestinian towns. In 1981, Sharon became Begin's Minister of Defense, and a year later he launched the war against Yasir Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization, which had turned the south of Lebanon into a forward base for attacks on Israel. It was, some argue, the only war Israel fought out of choice rather than necessity. Hundreds of Israeli soldiers lost their lives, along with thousands of Arabs, and the Israeli Army, which claims as its ethos "*Tohar Ha'neshek*" ("the purity of arms"), gained a reputation for callousness and excess.



When Sharon launched the attack on Lebanon, he told Prime Minister Begin's Cabinet that the attack would last two days and Israeli forces would advance only about twenty-five miles into Lebanon. But Sharon and the Cabinet were driven by grandiose desires: to install a Christian-led government in Beirut that would sign a peace treaty with Israel and to eradicate the infrastructure of the P.L.O. The war culminated in Israel's siege of Beirut and the massacre of innocent Palestinians by Sharon's Christian allies, the Phalangists, at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The Phalangist militia, bent on vengeance, entered the camps shortly after its leader, Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated. The Phalangists murdered nearly eight hundred people, many of them women and children. The massacre took place over thirty hours, within view of Israeli positions. A commission of inquiry eventually found that although Sharon did not have prior knowledge of it, he should have foreseen its likelihood when he agreed to send the Phalangists into the refugee camps.

Sharon was forced out of office, but the consequences for Israel were lasting. Israeli forces remained in southern Lebanon for another eighteen years, until Ehud Barak withdrew them late last spring. Sharon's invasion further radicalized the Palestinians: it turned Lebanon's Shiite Muslims against Israel (the Shiite Hezbollah is the most effective terrorist group Israel has ever faced), and it failed, of course, to eliminate the P.L.O. or Palestinian nationalism. Five years after the invasion, the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza rose up against the Israeli occupation, beginning their six-year Intifada.

After Lebanon, Sharon refused to fade away. He held a number of Cabinet positions through the late nineteen-eighties and early nineteen-nineties. When Rabin's Labor government took power, in 1992, Sharon served in the Knesset in opposition; he was appointed Foreign Minister by the Netanyahu government in 1998.

Sharon's record is not altogether without nuance. Under Netanyahu, he agreed to the Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank city of Hebron, which is one of Judaism's holiest cities, and he also agreed reluctantly to the withdrawal from thirteen per cent of the West Bank.

Sharon dissents from the Peres vision of the Middle East, but his dissent is not rooted in the quasi-messianic beliefs of the Greater Land of Israel movement, in which settlements are seen as a concrete fulfillment of a Biblical imperative. He is driven, instead, by a belief in the immutability of Arab hatred.

When I asked him if he had any regrets now about going to the Temple Mount, he replied without a moment's hesitation. "I am really sorry for every casualty, Jewish and Arab. But the only one who is responsible for that is Arafat." Then he said, "Look, I unmasked the Palestinians! That's what I did. So something good did come out of this. We saw their true intentions."

The Ashkenazi-dominated ideological left continues to despise Sharon (Yossi Sarid, the leader of the Meretz Party, compares him to Nero), but in another Israel—of the settlers, of the Orthodox, of the Russian immigrants and of the Sephardim, the Jews who came to Israel from the Islamic world—he is a giant.

One night, at Sharon's farm, I bumped into Uzi Landau, a Likud member of the Knesset. We were there to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot. Sharon had erected a sukkah, the booth in which Jews eat during the holiday, by the side of his house. Most sukkahs generally fit ten or fifteen people; this one fit two hundred. There were a half-dozen other members of the Likud Knesset faction present, as well as a group of teen-agers wearing "Likud Youth" T-shirts and a pack of mid-level Party leaders, tough-looking Sephardic men who wore their shirts open to their navels and chewed on cigars as they conducted political business: the smoke-filled sukkah. I asked Landau how he felt about the collapse of the peace process and the Palestinian return to violence. "Oslo is Munich, and Arik is Churchill," he said.

Another evening, after watching Sharon deliver a series of speeches in Ofakim, a desert town not far from Sycamore Farm, I attended a dinner in Sharon's honor at the home of Ofakim's mayor, Yair Hazan. Hazan is, like many of his constituents, a Jew of Moroccan descent. The foyer of his house is hung with portraits of great Sephardic sages, including two framed drawings of the legendary Moroccan wonder rabbi known as the Baba Sali. Hanging next to one of the Baba Sali's portraits is a *khamsa*, an inverted hand made of painted plaster, which is placed near the front door to ward off the evil eye.

Seated across from me at dinner was the deputy mayor of Ofakim, Shlomo Azran, a young, standoffish rabbi and member of the Sephardic Shas Party. To my right sat a local city-council member named Moshe Peretz, a heavy-set man with a walrus mustache, wearing a small red *kippa* on his head. Much of the talk was about "the situation"—the Israeli euphemism for the current uprising. "You want me to tell you about the Arabs? I'll tell you about the Arabs," Peretz said. He leaned in close to my face, inadvertently dragging his jacket sleeve through my hummus, and said, "If you treat the Arabs badly, they love you. If you treat them nicely, they'll eat you for dinner."

Across the table, Rabbi Azran happened to overhear us, and smiled. "In the Torah, it says that the goyim will *always* hate the Jews, no matter what," he said. "*All* the goyim. Forever!"

I turned back to Peretz. "The Rabbi isn't wrong," he said. "All you need is a strong hand, and the whole situation will come to an end."

I asked the men around me whether Sharon's record ever gave them pause. Peretz looked at me coldly and answered, "Sabra and Shatila doesn't bother me. Does it bother you?"

We ate in silence for a moment. Then

A TIE-DYE T-SHIRT

Home from prep school
in my short-trousered herringbone suit,
I counted hippies on the streets of Notting Hill.
In their crushed-velvet bell-bottoms
they moved like shaggy-hooved centaurs.
I tagged along with a group
drifting down the Portobello.
One of them, tall and slim with long black hair,
wore a tie-dye T-shirt;
the first I had ever seen:
yellow mainly, with starbursts of rose and lime-green.
He was playing a silver flute. I felt myself
in the presence of superior beings,
as Major Wynkoop said of the Cheyennes.

Now thirty years later
my daughter makes me a tie-dye T-shirt
from one of the kits they sell
in the kitschy Tinker Street head shops.
I put it on and a strange
tremor of happiness goes through me.
I've half a mind to crack open
one of the spiked pods on this Jimson weed,
toss its seed-spurt into the air,
swallow what the gods let me catch,
and hallucinate a week or two
in the psychedelic spring meadow,
where goldfinches and rose-breasted grosbeaks
flit between the creamy shadblow
and the lime-green,
catkin-veiled birches.

—*James Lasdun*

someone said, "Arik needs hummus," and I passed a dish to Sharon, who was lost in his food and appeared not to have been listening to our conversation.

Later, when I asked Sharon to explain his conception of the conflict, he answered, "The Arabs don't want the Jews to be here. That is the secret of this whole story." He went on, "This land we are on is considered by the Muslims to be holy land. They will never let anyone else possess it. You should read the Koran. You'll see what they think about the Jews. They want to take this land by violence."

As Sharon spoke, I recalled a conversation I'd had earlier in the day. On the way to Ofakim, I had stopped in the town of Arad, not far from the Dead Sea, in order to talk to its most famous resident, the writer Amos Oz. He is the face of the humane Israel—the Israel that reined in Sharon after the disaster in Lebanon.

Oz greeted me in his basement study. He is sixty-one, and no longer quite the picture of Sabra virility he once was, but his face still has a chiselled quality.

"At Camp David, Barak offered to recognize a Palestinian state that would extend over ninety-four per cent of the occupied territories," Oz said. "Plus, there would be swap of territory for the remaining six per cent. Plus, East Jerusalem would be the capital of Palestine. Well, Arafat turned this down. I suspect now that they prefer to give birth to Palestine on the battlefield, not at the negotiating table. The battlefield is more heroic, more macho, perhaps—more Muslim, I don't know."

"What do you mean, exactly?"

He reflected a moment. "More in line with the tradition of militant Islam," he said. "Arafat himself says that this is a holy war for holy land. It's written in the Koran that the faith of Muhammad is the sword."

For Oz, a particular phase of the Middle East peace process has come to a crashing conclusion. "There is something very American, very Christian, if you don't mind, about this process," he said. "They speak of liking one another, of the need to understand one another. But we do understand each other. Perhaps that is the problem."

Amos Oz in agreement with Ariel Sharon. Who could have foreseen it?

There are in fact very few Israelis left who believe that a peace of roses is in store for the Middle East. After more than seven years of direct American intervention, the spirit, if not the letter, of Oslo is dead. Positions have hardened; hatreds seem absolute.

One person whose views have remained firm despite recent events is Shimon Peres, the former Prime Minister, who shared a Nobel Peace Prize with Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat for the achievements of Oslo. If Barak loses heart and withdraws from the race, Peres will most likely become the Likud Party candidate.

Peres is Israel's greatest optimist, its foremost proponent of what he has termed "the new Middle East." In a 1993 book of that name, Peres wrote, "The Middle East can apply the lessons of both the computer revolution and the rise of Asian economic power. To do this, its leaders must abandon the conflicts of yesterday and invest in education instead of the arms race."

Peres has become a figure of some ridicule in Israel: Right-wingers call him a solipsist; those in the center call him a fabulist. The left-wing Foreign Minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami, in a conversation with me last November, mocked Peres's oft-stated belief that Israel might one day be able to join the Arab League. But Peres stubbornly continues to push his vision.

"There is a need for a new Middle East," he told me one day in November as we sat by a window in the Knesset cafeteria. He seemed out of place there: he is dignified in demeanor, and impeccably dressed, whereas the cafeteria is more Second Avenue Deli than Senate Dining Room—the service lacks a certain grace, and almost everyone talks louder than is absolutely necessary. At a table near us sat almost every member of the Shas Party faction, and they were all yelling at each other.

"We are between Africa and Europe," Peres said. "This region can easily become like Africa, and that would be the old Middle East, or we could go the way of Europe, become an extension of Europe."

But what happened?

"The two parties both have their own perceptions," he said. "We think the Palestinians have a grand design to make our lives miserable. They think we have a master plan to cut them to pieces. Well, we don't have a master plan and they don't have a grand design."

Many Israeli leaders, on the left as well as the right, are today calling for a kind of forced, almost punitive, disengagement by Israel from the Palestinians. Shlomo Avineri, a left-wing advocate of Palestinian statehood who formerly served as director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, told me that he would advocate placing minefields between Israel and the future state of Palestine, should border security be threatened. "The alternative to making war is not making love but not making war," he said.

"What is he talking about?" Peres said, when I mentioned Avineri's comments. "Walls don't stop missiles. Walls don't stop pollution. Walls will stop trade, though."

As we talked, Uri Savir, a Knesset member from the Center Party who is the president of the Peres Center for Peace, came by to tell Peres about a Palestinian attack. Three Jews, including a mother of five, had been killed by gunmen near the Jewish settlement of Ofra, on the road that runs up the spine of the West Bank.

Beepers and cell phones were sounding across the room, and the volume of a television set parked at the center of the cafeteria was turned up as Knesset members took in the news.

When Savir left, I asked Peres what he made of the attack.

"Setbacks are an important part of crises," he answered calmly. "I'm not terribly impressed by crises. Life is difficult, but compared to what?"

This is one reason Shimon Peres lost so many races for Prime Minister. Three Jews are dead by the side of a road, and he doesn't bother to express regret. For Peres, it seems, only the future is real; the hardships of today are abstractions.

II—ORIGINAL SIN

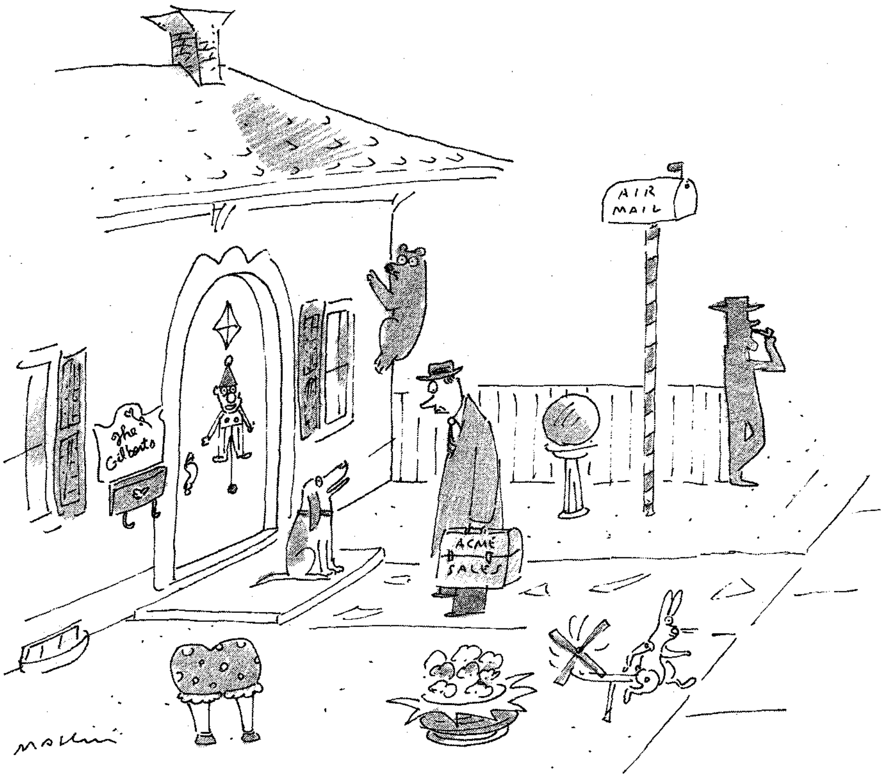
On December 15th, which was the third Friday of the holy month of Ramadan on the Islamic calendar, the Israeli police barred Muslim men under the age of thirty-five from attending prayers at the al-Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount. Seven Palestinians had been killed on the Mount the day after Sharon's visit, and the police were eager to keep young Muslims away from a place electric with the promise of martyrdom.

At about eleven-thirty Friday morning, I joined a group of young Palestinian men as they walked through East Jerusalem toward the Damascus Gate, which is the main entrance to the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. Black clouds hung overhead, and the stone walkways were slick with rain and rotting garbage. The Palestinians collected rocks as they approached the gate. As we reached the plaza in front of it, we saw Israeli policemen in great numbers before us. Green-uniformed border policemen stood on the walls of the Old City, each one carrying an automatic rifle with an attached sniper scope. Other border policemen stood in clusters before the walls, holding tear-gas grenade launchers and wooden batons.

By a quarter to twelve, about a thousand young Palestinian men had gathered before the gate, facing two hundred helmeted police officers and soldiers. The police were screening everyone: only women, older men, and children were allowed into the Old City. A group of young men tried to push their way through, and were forced back. The crowd grew mean. The Palestinians taunted the border policemen, many of whom were Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia. "Go back to the jungle!" one Palestinian man yelled, in Hebrew, directly into the face of an Ethiopian. The Ethiopian was stoic, but another policeman beside him told the Palestinian, in Arabic, "I'm going to fuck your mother!" The Palestinian replied, "You're the cunt brother of sixty-six whores!"

Several Palestinians began setting piles of garbage on fire, and the crowd surged forward, chanting "*Allahu akbar!*" ("God is great!") Then a dozen mounted police arrived, their horses fitted with plastic visors. "Give them strong hits!" the commander of the mounted unit told his men, and then they charged. The horses terrified the Arabs, who scattered down the side streets. Police on foot followed behind, smacking the stragglers with batons.

The police then pulled back, and the Palestinians gave up; they organized prayers on the wet ground, using ragged pieces of cardboard as prayer mats. In the near-distance stood the shimmering Dome of the Rock, close yet unobtainable.



"Whatever you're selling, they're buying."

In Jerusalem, more so than in any other place, the three monotheistic religions are in direct competition. It is a small historical irony that today many religious Jews see the presence of the Dome of the Rock on the Mount as an insult, because the Dome was built in the seventh century as a rebuke to Christianity. The early Christian rulers of Jerusalem had turned the Temple Mount into a rubbish heap, as an expression of triumph over Judaism. When the Muslims conquered the city, they immediately cleaned up the Mount, and venerated it by building the Dome, inscribing anti-Christian quotations on the walls.

The competition between Jews and Muslims for primacy on the Mount is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The current uprising is frequently compared with the Palestinian Intifada that began in the late eighties, but in its origins it resembles a much earlier Arab uprising, one that took place in 1929, when Great Britain governed Palestine. In the 1929 riots, Arabs killed more than a hundred Jews in such cities as Hebron and Safed. The riots began after a period of increased militancy on both sides. Arab religious figures, led by the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, inflamed their followers by warning of a concerted Jewish attempt to conquer the Temple Mount and destroy its Islamic holy places. Their proof: Jewish worshippers had placed tables and prayer partitions in front of the Western Wall.

Today, the Mufti of Jerusalem is a cleric named Sheikh Ekrima Sabri. In his capacity as preacher of the al-Aqsa mosque, he became known as an extremist and a conspiracy theorist. He was appointed Mufti by Arafat six years ago. In the past, Sabri stated publicly that the Jews exaggerated the scope of the Holocaust in order to win world sympathy for their quest to take Palestine. (In late November, he told me that "the Jews" were trying to steal the American election for Al Gore. "They will steal it, and then they will remove him, and then the Jew Lieberman will take over. That is why we support Bush.")

When I mentioned the 1929 riots to the Mufti, and their echoes in the uprising of today, he quickly corrected my recounting of the Jewish provocation. "The Jews tried to put a *desk* there," he said. "And chairs. They put *chairs* there!"

And the Jews, the Mufti said, are at it again. He cited the names of several Jewish organizations that want to build a Third Temple on the site where the Dome of the Rock now stands.

Jews who would like to bring about a violent end to the Muslim holy places number perhaps in the hundreds. They are dangerous, of course—the Shabak has in the past broken up at least one cell of extremists bent on bombing the Dome—but they have no significant following. According to the Mufti, though, the desire to rebuild the Temple is lodged in the heart of almost every Jew, and certainly in Ariel Sharon's. "We have all this information that he was coming to look for a new place to build the Temple," the Mufti said.

"Really? 'Happy Hour' is meant ironically? And you say everybody knows this?"

Muslims have constructed an alternative history of the site, one that denies its Jewish origins. "There isn't even a single stone in the Old City of Jerusalem that is Jewish," the Mufti said. "There is no proof at all that the Jews were ever in Jerusalem."

That the Jews have no religious claim to the Temple Mount is a belief shared by a cross-section of Palestinians. Palestinian peace negotiators argued this line to President Clinton at the Camp David summit last July. (Clinton, according to the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shlomo Ben-Ami, "deeply believes that the Temple is there, *testified* that this is the case, that the Temple is there, in the Baptist meaning.")

Arafat has not let go of the argument. At the Arab summit in Cairo last October, he accused Israel of denying the truth of the Noble Sanctuary, by "forging its history and reality and saying it is the place where the Temple was built." He also accused Israel of "licentiously attacking the worshippers in its mosques and those defending its honor and sanctity" and "attempting to Judaize holy Jerusalem and its Christian and Islamic holy places."

One such Muslim holy place Judaized by Israel, the Mufti told me, is the Western Wall itself, which is also sacred to Muslims, who know it as al-Buraq, after the winged steed that carried Muhammad to Jerusalem on his journey to Heaven. Muslims believe that Muhammad tethered al-Buraq to the Wall before ascending the Mount.

The Mufti said, "The Jews can pray at the Wall if they want—under Muslim protection. I don't know why they need to pray there, but they can if they want."

I asked the Mufti to explain his understanding of the Jewish relationship to the Mount and to the Wall.

"First, there is no Temple. This is a lie. You should know that." He paused, and went on, "But the Jews cry at the Wall for two reasons, one reason that they'll tell you and one that they won't. The first reason is that they believe that Moses lost the Ten Commandments somewhere on the mountain, and they come to cry at the Wall because they are sad. This is the reason they give. The second reason—this is the one they won't tell you—is that they cry because God has forsaken them and they know it. They are angry with God. In the Torah, it says that the final prophet will be Jewish. But they are so angry, because God chose his final prophet from among the Arabs, not the Jews. They are crying because God has forsaken them."

The Islamization of the conflict has permeated many levels of Palestinian society. At a funeral march that I attended in Ramallah recently, the struggle against Israel was cast not in modern political terms but in the stark language of an age-old religious war. (Ramallah, of course, was the site of the lynching of two Israeli reserve soldiers last October; young Palestinian men dipped their hands in the blood of the Israelis and waved them in triumph.) The vehemence of Ramallah is one of the consistently surprising aspects of this uprising. Situated immediately to the north of Jerusalem, it is a cosmopolitan city, and many of its residents hold American citizenship. It has fine restaurants and sophisticated hotels. Ramallah is not Gaza.

The funerals were for two men killed by the Israeli Army in al-Birah, a Ramallah suburb. The Army said that the Palestinians were firing weapons at the nearby Jewish settlement of Psagot. The Palestinians say that the two men were merely helping to move people away from a firefight.

Thousands of people attended the funerals. The procession was claustrophobic—too many men for the narrow streets, too much bumping—and the crowd was sullen; a number of the marchers were armed. The bodies were borne on trucks well in front of where I walked. I was stuck behind a Mitsubishi pickup, on which sat a Fatah activist with a megaphone. He shouted, "Give us weapons, O Abu Ammar, and we will set the West Bank on fire!" (Abu Ammar is Arafat's nom de guerre.) The crowd chanted with him. "O Saddam, send your missiles to Tel Aviv!" Then I heard, from behind me, another slogan taken up by the crowd: "*Khaybar, Khaybar, ya Yahud, jaysh Muhammad sawf ya'ud!*" ("O Jews of Khaybar, the army of Muhammad is returning!")

I had not heard this particular slogan since 1991, during the first Intifada, but that was in Gaza, and it was the fundamentalists of the militant Islamic group Hamas who had chanted it. This crowd was beardless—a mostly secular crowd. Khaybar is the name of an oasis near Medina that, in the time of Muhammad, was populated mainly by Jews. In the year 628, Muhammad led the Muslims against it, defeating the Jews in battle and subjugating the survivors, who would later be expelled from Arabia. The intent of the slogan, then, is clear: what the army of Muhammad did to the Jews fourteen hundred years ago in Arabia it would soon do again in Palestine.

At the cemetery, which sits across a narrow valley from the Psagot settlement, the uprising leader, Marwan Barghouti, arrived to deliver a eulogy. Barghouti, a short, compact man who, in the spirit of Oslo, once told me that he had more than thirty friends in the Israeli Knesset, now looked hollowed out; there were bags under his eyes, and he was accompanied by armed bodyguards. A week before, another Fatah leader, Hussein Abayat, had been assassinated outside Bethlehem by missiles fired from an Israeli helicopter. Two Palestinian bystanders, both women, were killed as well.

Barghouti's eulogy was more a war cry than a remembrance of the dead: he seemed to tear apart his vocal cords as he spoke. "Heaven is opening its doors to receive these martyrs of al-Aqsa!" he said. "The Israelis are sending our people to Heaven every day. They are killing us every day with helicopters, but they will never be able to destroy us. Look at that settlement!" He pointed in the direction of Psagot. "Those settlers will learn, I promise."

"*Allahu akbar!*" the mourners shouted.

In the distance we heard sirens. "Those ambulances are going to collect the blood of our people," Barghouti said.

Then Barghouti said something surprising. "Let us close the bypass roads!" He meant the roads, some built recently by the Barak government, that connect the settlements to each other and to Israel proper. These are roads that avoid Arab-populated areas, allowing Jews to drive safely through the West Bank. (The roads, which are patrolled by the Israeli Army, make it difficult for Palestinians to travel between their own cities; they not infrequently must endure the inexplicable delays and petty harassments of multiple Israeli checkpoints.) Many settlers commute to work in Jerusalem or Greater Tel Aviv. When the roads are closed, the settlers are trapped. When they find themselves trapped, the theory holds, many of them will pick up and leave, go back to Tel Aviv. Attacks on roads travelled by Jews have become commonplace—in one of the more notorious, the son and daughter-in-law of the late Arab-hating extremist Meir Kahane were killed in an ambush near Ofra.

Barghouti closed with a message to the gunmen scattered through the crowd. "We are asking everyone not to shoot in the air," he said. "Don't shoot in

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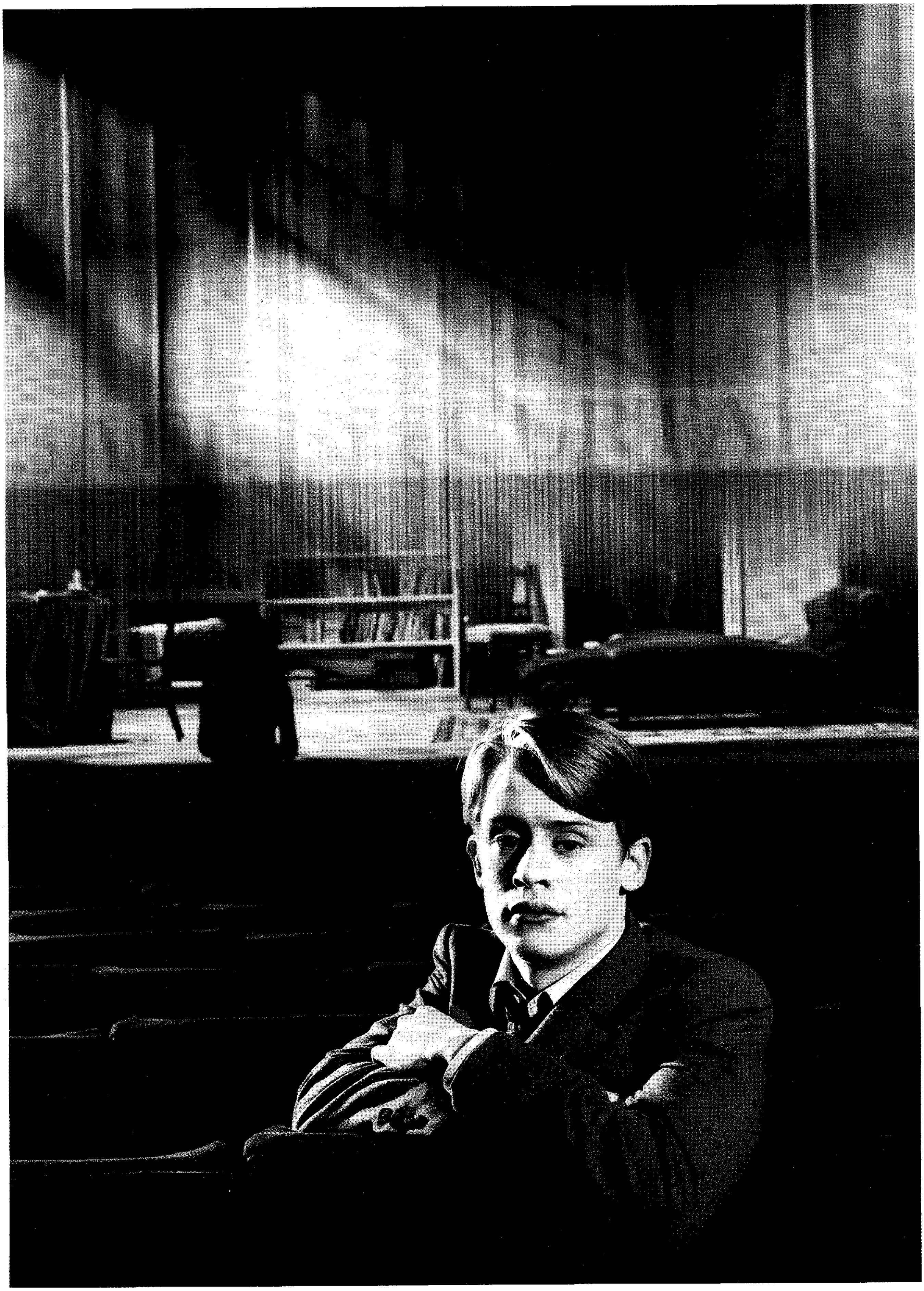
SHOWCASE BY DUDLEY REED

MAN-CHILD

As a kid, Macaulay Culkin was Hollywood's intrepid Little Man, who won world renown in "Home Alone" for his resourceful ability to keep the predatory world out. Now, at twenty, in Richard Nelson's deft play "Madame Melville," at London's Vaudeville Theatre, Culkin is home alone again, but this time he's a hesitant man-child, desperately working to let the predatory world—in the form of a perky French high-school teacher (Irène Jacob)—*in*. With his doe-eyes and bee-stung lips, Culkin stands before us as Carl, a churnin' urn of burnin' fifteen-year-old funk, to whom Mme. Melville gives a crash course in desire.

At once poised and perplexed, Culkin is a fetching package. A shock of preppy blond hair falls over his face, and his tapered fingers telegraph his sensitivity. His voice is still callow, and his diction isn't great, but this ordinariness works for his character. Despite Culkin's years in the public eye, there is something virginal and modest about him, something emergent. Culkin's skill—and he is very skillful—is to articulate roiling adolescent thrill and anxiety as the new continent of lust looms into view. There is nothing leering or laddish about his excitement. Mme. Melville insists that "The Kama Sutra" is an art book, and as Carl reads a passage to the audience his eyes lower and his pale skin reddens in what seems to be actual embarrassment. And when the affair ends—with a farewell scene that Nelson brilliantly stages twice—Culkin's controlled sobs are deeply affecting. They remind us of the ache of first love, but also of something else—the almost forgotten knowledge, which Culkin's very public childhood has borne out, that a kid, long before he discovers the joys and pains of sex, can know all about the broken heart.

—*John Lahr*



"Hi, I'm Zeus, the man behind the myth."

• •

the air at rallies or at funerals. These bullets have a job to do. We need to save these bullets for the important targets."

The war of the bypass roads has become a gang fight. There has been no exodus of settlers from the West Bank or Gaza in response to the Palestinian attacks. Instead, many of these settlers—or, more to the point, their young, Israeli Army-trained sons—have become roving vigilantes.

Not long after the funerals, I was travelling at night to a village north of Ramallah. I was being driven by a Palestinian man named Mustafa Nobilsi, who works frequently with Western reporters. As we were driving along a bypass that runs near the Jewish settlement of Beit El, we saw fires burning on the road ahead of us. At the junction, a group of settlers were pouring gasoline over burning tires. Other settlers—maybe twenty of them—had linked arms and formed a human barrier across the two-lane road. There were about fifty in all. They seemed to be in their early twenties, and they wore white shirts, and large knit *kippot* on their heads. "No Arabs on the road!" one of the settlers yelled. "These are our roads!"

I was afraid the settlers would drag Mustafa out of the car, but then I remembered that he can pass as Jewish. He speaks fluent Hebrew, and his skills include mimicking the chin-forward swagger and impatient speaking style of the young Israeli male.

The settlers allowed us to pass, and we parked by the side of the road to see what would happen next.

A few minutes later, a truck approached the blockade. It was driven by a man who could never pass as Jewish. The settlers let out a whoop, and swarmed the truck. The driver locked the doors. The settlers pounded on the windshield and screamed for him to turn around.

Then the police arrived, and soldiers from the nearby checkpoint. Fires were burning; the settlers were furious, red-faced. Ten or fifteen of them still stood in front of the truck, not allowing it to move. The police presence emboldened the driver: he opened his door and began cursing the settlers. They cursed back. "You dirty Arab son of a bitch!" a young yeshiva student shouted. "Get off our road."

"Fuck you, you cunt!" the driver responded, in Arabic. Then, in Hebrew, he yelled, "Son of a whore!" The settlers reached for him, but police officers pushed them back. A chant went up: "Dirty Arab! Dirty Arab!" The police pushed the settlers back again.

Mustafa, in the meantime, had sidled up close to the driver, and spoke to him in Arabic. Then he said to me, "He's a Druze!"

The Druze are a Muslim sect centered in Israel's north. They are citizens of Israel, and serve in its armed forces; they are well represented in the border police, where they have gained a reputation among Palestinians for brutality.

I asked the truck driver in Hebrew if he had served in the Israeli Army. He reached into his wallet and showed me a card identifying him as a veteran. The police captain saw this, and said, "He's one of ours!" The settlers seemed stunned, and moved away from the truck. Mustafa asked the driver why he hadn't identified himself as an Israeli Army veteran in the first place.

"Fuck them," he said. "I don't have to explain anything." As he drove away he yelled out to the settlers—fellow-veterans of the same Army—"I'm proud to be an Arab, you assholes!"

In the late nineteen-eighties, I worked for a time on a kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley, southeast of Haifa. I was a great believer in the philosophy known as *avoda ivrit*—the idea that Jews will redeem their land and themselves by hard physical labor. So I enjoyed working in the chicken houses, great long buildings that were burning hot and stank horribly of the feces of five thousand birds. These were egg-laying birds, on a six-month cycle. After the sixth month, we loaded the chickens up on trucks bound for slaughter. Then it was time to clean out the house. We pulled up the floor slats and hosed them down, and scrubbed the egg-catching machines. All that was left to do was clean out the droppings under the slats, a layer three feet high. I asked the foreman when we would begin shovelling out the house. "We're not cleaning the shit out," he said. "We get the Arabs to clean up the shit. That's why we have Arabs."

The Arabs we used in the chicken houses came from the town of Umm al-Fahm, which lay not far away, to the south. Its residents were citizens of Israel, members of its million-strong Arab minority: the Arabs who didn't leave in 1948, when Israel gained independence. Today, the Arabs of Israel make up about nineteen per cent of the country's population.

I went to Umm al-Fahm shortly after the beginning of the uprising. The town had exploded. For the first time, large numbers of Israeli Arabs—today, a preferred term is "Palestinian Israeli"—had joined the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in violent protest. Thirteen Israeli Arabs were killed by the police, two in Umm al-Fahm. Many Israelis, Jews and Arabs alike, felt that the police overreacted; a commission of inquiry has been appointed, and the Barak government has promised to spend about a billion dollars to aid the Arabs, whose towns and schools have been chronically underfunded by the government in Jerusalem.

Umm al-Fahm is one of the most radicalized of the Israeli Arab towns. It is under the control of the northern faction of the Islamic Movement, which is fundamentalist in outlook and denies Israel's right to exist. The leader of the Islamic Movement in Israel, Sheikh Ra'id Salah, is the town's mayor. I met him in his office there. An Islamic Movement official, Abdulhakim Mufead, translated, and added his own commentary.

It is commonly said in Israel that its Arab citizens were rioting not in defense of al-Aqsa but out of frustration with their economic plight—they no longer want to be treated like second-class citizens. I mentioned this to the Sheikh, and to Mufead, and they laughed.

"Al-Aqsa is not a market where everything is for sale," the Sheikh said. "This is our right as Muslims, to defend al-Aqsa."

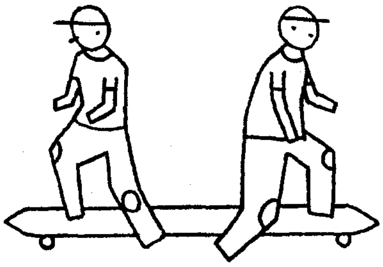
"They think all we want is material," Mufead said. "They think we're just bodies, without souls. Money, money, money! This is for our animals. The solution to our problem is not material."

I was curious, naturally, to hear their opinions of the area's kibbutzim: unlike the settlements of the West Bank and Gaza, the kibbutzim here are populated not by right-wing Orthodox Jews but by left-wing secularists. My chicken boss aside, the people I knew from the area were not insensitive to their Arab neighbors. But Mufead said, "The kibbutzim are the worst. They're worse than the settlers. Because they're hypocrites! They're part of the same system, but they deny it."

On the way out of town, I stopped by the office of Hashem Mahameed, an Arab member of the Knesset. He is not a religious man; he is a former Marxist sympathizer, and I expected his analysis to be more sophisticated than that of his fundamentalist constituents. But what he said was "I think we have learned recently that there's a little Kahane in the heart of every Jew."

Umm al-Fahm is situated in the area of Israel known as the Triangle. It holds one of the two major concentrations of Arabs inside Israel. The other area is the Galilee, parts of which have experienced a catastrophic breakdown in the relations between Arab and Jew. There are roughly fifty thousand Jews in the heart of the Galilee, and three hundred and fifty thousand Arabs.

In the late nineteen-seventies, Ariel Sharon launched a program in the Galilee called Mitzpim, or Lookouts. It was a plan to strengthen the Jewish presence there by building Jewish villages on the mountaintops. The Lookouts program was not controversial among Jews—the Galilee is part of Israel proper, not the occupied territories—and it drew a very different type of Israeli from the hard-core, rifle-carrying right-wingers who were settling the West Bank. Idealistic left-wing Zionists came to the villages in numbers.



Today, there are ten thousand Jews in twenty-eight Mitzpim villages of the central Galilee. The mayor of the regional council is named Erez Kreisler, and one day he invited me to his office in Misgav, a kind of county seat of the Jewish enclave.

"In 1982, the Misgav regional council made a strategic decision about how to deal with the Arab population around us," Kreisler said. "The council decided that it wanted to live here in peace and coöperation and coexistence. They decided not to be separatists, like the West Bank. It was a major ideological decision." Roads were built to benefit both the Jewish settlements and the Arab towns; water and sewage lines were connected; a school for Jews and Arabs was opened.

"Most of the people of Misgav are from the left," Kreisler said. "We wanted not only to speak about coexistence but to practice it." People in Misgav also tend to be secular, not religious, and the region draws an eclectic mixture of artists and entrepreneurs, and seekers as well: one village is populated entirely by practitioners of transcendental meditation.

"I'm not being patronizing when I say we thought our Arab neighbors could benefit from our being here," Kreisler said. "I know it may sound like that, but if we weren't helping they'd say we were discriminating."

Pointing out a factory in the valley below, Kreisler said, "Two thousand Arabs work there. They make underwear for Calvin Klein and Victoria's Secret. Underwear, but quality. The factory wouldn't be there if we hadn't come."

So it was a shock to the liberal Jews of Misgav when their Arab neighbors, in the first days of the al-Aqsa Intifada, tried to burn down their villages and hold them under siege for days at a time. As in the West Bank, the Arabs targeted the roads, stoning the Jews' cars.

Before my visit, an Arab Galilean named Aziz Haidar, who is now a professor at Al-Quds University, in Jerusalem, had wondered aloud to me how the

Israelis could be surprised, saying, "Their idea of coexistence is the coexistence between the donkey and the rider." I mentioned this comment to Kreisler.

"Bullshit!" he said. "O.K., so the country of Israel was born in a kind of sin. Yeah, there were Arabs here, and they attacked us, and they lost the war and they became refugees—we know the history."

In 1947, the United Nations voted to divide Palestine into two states, one Jewish, one Arab. With great reservations, the Jews of Palestine accepted the plan; the Arabs rejected it. When Israel declared independence the next year, Arab armies attacked, and were defeated on the battlefield. In the course of battle, many thousands of Palestinian Arabs either fled from their homes or were expelled by advancing Jewish forces. For most Jews, the question of who started it is easy: the Arabs rejected compromise, and launched a war that they then lost. For the Arabs, the answer is equally easy: the Jews had no national rights in Palestine, and the creation of the refugee crisis is their fault.

"I say that as a Jew it is my right to live in this country," Kreisler went on. "This is the only Jewish land in the world, and we won't run out. What do they want? To go back to the beginning and erase everything? To be frank, they wish they didn't live near us, and the Jews wish they didn't live near them. But the reality says we have to coexist."

Kreisler said the residents of Misgav are only now opening up, in a limited way, to their Arab neighbors. "Our basketball teams are beginning to play in the Arab villages now." But something broke when the uprising started, he added, and it can't be fixed. "People are suspicious now, and that will take a long time to change." One result of the violence, he said, is that the residents of Misgav, who support Ehud Barak on most issues, do not want to see thousands of Palestinian refugees returning to the Galilee from Lebanon. Or even hundreds. "That would be a lot to ask right now," he said.

It is exactly what the Palestinians are asking for right now. In the first, shining years of the Oslo peace process, any talk about the most intractable issues confronting Israel and the Palestinians was assiduously avoided. So it came as a surprise to many in Israel—and to Israel's friend in the White House—when the Palestinians at Camp David made it clear that they were unready to bring an end to their claims, and an end to the conflict.

"You'll eat anything with 'poids net' on it."

I discussed this issue with a friend, Akram Hanieh, who is the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Al-Ayyam*. He is an Arafat confidant, and was expelled from the West Bank in 1986. (Ehud Barak, then a major general, signed his deportation order.) Akram made his way to P.L.O. headquarters in Tunis, where he served as a deputy to Arafat's No. 2, Abu Jihad, until Israeli commandos assassinated Abu Jihad, in 1988. Akram returned to the West Bank in 1994, just before Ramallah came under Palestinian self-rule.

Akram is a literary man. He writes short stories, and he recently published in book form a series of articles about the collapse of negotiations at Camp David, which he attended in his capacity as an adviser to Arafat. He believes that the Americans convinced themselves that the proper setting could induce the warring sides to make peace. He writes acerbically about the atmosphere of Camp David: "[Madeleine] Albright once invited delegates to a movie, and delegates were also invited to play a basketball game. As none of the Palestinian delegates showed up, the Israelis ended up playing with the Marines."

I asked Akram to explain the Palestinian turn toward violence: after all, the underlying principle of the entire peace process was an agreement to retire the gun and the bomb as tools of negotiation.

"Is building a settlement violence?" he asked. "What about the humiliation of people at the roadblocks?"

At Camp David, Akram was assigned to the committee discussing the situation of the Palestinian refugees. Arafat's position is that Israel must accept the principle that any Palestinian refugee or descendant of a refugee has a right to return to pre-1967 Israel. The refugee question has bollixed up past negotiations even more than the fate of Jerusalem. Agreeing to this Palestinian demand, Barak has said, would mean national suicide for Israel; if it were to grant citizenship to the several million members of the Palestinian diaspora, it would cease to be a Jewish state.

A second Palestinian demand is perhaps still more difficult for Israel to meet. Palestinian negotiators are demanding from Israel an admission of responsibility—a statement in which Israel accepts blame for creating millions of refugees.

Akram told me that in 1948 his parents were driven from the village of Abu Shusha by the nascent Israeli Army. The village stood near the place where Ben-Gurion International Airport now stands. If the Jewish claim to the Temple Mount is a cornerstone of the Zionist narrative, then Palestinian victimization in 1948 is the linchpin of the Arab narrative.

"It could be one of those things that crawl into your ear and lay eggs, and the eggs hatch and burrow into your—nope. It looks fine."

III—THE PRECIPICE

On a weekday morning last month, I was sitting in the office of Avraham Burg, the speaker of the Knesset. Burg is forty-five, a combat veteran, a founder of Peace Now, and a religious Jew. If Ehud Barak fails to win reëlection, Burg is likely to become the leader of the Labor Party. He is widely considered to be a future candidate for Prime Minister.

As we spoke, Burg's secretary announced that Barak was on the line. Burg rolled his eyes. "All of a sudden, he wants friends," he said. "Listen to my end of the conversation. I'm sure you'll find it interesting." Burg doesn't like Barak. He is not alone: much of the Cabinet is exasperated with Barak as well.

The Prime Minister was calling to seek Burg's help: Barak was desperate to block Shimon Peres from launching his own candidacy for the office.

"Ehud, you're talking to the wrong address," Burg said over the telephone. "Talk to your Interior Minister." This was a dig: the minister in question, Haim Ramon, has become a Barak adversary.

"Ehud, listen to me," Burg continued. "I don't know what you want from me. We don't want a Florida here. Talk to someone else on this."

Burg hung up. "He's killing me," he said. "He's a very smart man, but he lacks emotional intelligence."

Early in his tenure, Barak cut out of the peacemaking process most of the Labor leadership—men like Burg and Peres, who had negotiated the original Oslo Accord. Barak was so sure of himself, and of his ability to negotiate an end to the conflict, that he sought no help. Now he stands at the precipice of epic failure, and he is almost entirely alone.

I spoke to Barak last month in his office, in a fortified compound in West Jerusalem just down the street from the Knesset. When we met, he did not seem like a man under any special pressure; he was as relaxed as someone on holiday. He joked, and told stories, and ignored his secretary's requests to bring the interview to an end.

"I feel very calm and quiet," he said. "I know that what I'm doing is right."

Few Israelis agree with this assessment. Ariel Sharon is widely unpopular, but he is destroying Barak in the polls. And those who say they are supporting Sharon over Barak are not necessarily right wing. When polls ask voters to choose between Sharon and Shimon Peres, the result is a tie. Barak, then, is less popular than two of the least popular men in Israeli public life. The fact that potential Sharon voters would jump to Peres, should he replace Barak, means that this election is more about desperation than ideology: Israelis are looking for someone, anyone, to lead them out of the mess.

Barak made perhaps his most fateful decision last spring, when he began to push hard for a final resolution to the conflict with the Palestinians. He was always dubious of the Oslo schedule: he believed, he said, that it was dangerous for Israel to give up territory incrementally without an understanding of the Palestinian endgame. So he pushed for a summit, and the clarity it would bring.

"I had decided that in order to avoid a tragedy, a deterioration into full-scale violence, that we have to—without breaking from our vital interests—just put everything on the table and try to solve it."

His reading of Israeli history told him that it was time for painful compromise. "We were clearly heading toward a tragedy that should be avoided," he said. "I was a lieutenant colonel in the 1973 war, and I witnessed how we moved toward the iceberg collision, blinding ourselves into believing that the Arab world would accept the result of the Six-Day War," in which Israel conquered the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai, and the Golan Heights. "That blindness cost us the lives of three thousand Israelis. I have seen how we suffered from hubris. After the peace treaty with Egypt, we went into Lebanon to create a new order there. It was a tragedy, and I put an end to it unilaterally. I was a major general

"A lawyer unpaid is justice denied."

when the Intifada started. Once again, it was a misjudgment of reality to believe that a Jewish democratic state could rule over another people for twenty years."

And so, at Camp David, Barak broke the final taboo, and discussed sharing Jerusalem with the Palestinians. By attempting to fulfill one campaign promise—to bring peace—he broke another: a commitment to keep Jerusalem whole and in Jewish hands. It was, he said, a wrenching moment for him. "Emotionally, I feel like a right-winger," he told me. "In my head, I'm kind of left. Not left, but realistic, pragmatic. But in my heart I can easily understand the dreams. The first time I went up to the Temple Mount, I got goosebumps."

But Barak did not have to resolve the contradiction between obtaining peace and holding Jerusalem. Instead of making a deal, Arafat encouraged an uprising—a political gift to Ariel Sharon—and because of it Barak, trailing by about twenty points in the polls last week, will most likely lose his job.

When I asked Barak if he was wrong to trust Arafat, he replied, "I don't know what it means, to trust. He is the Palestinian leader, not the Israeli leader, and he is determined to do whatever he can to achieve the Palestinian objectives. The real question is not whether we trust him. The question is whether there is a potential agreement that could be better over all for both sides, a win-win, not a zero-sum, game.

"The real task of statesmanship in these situations is not to erase national visions or national dreams. Who else but the Jewish people can testify that no one can erase the dreams of a nation? My objective is not to make the Palestinians stop dreaming or make Islam stop being what it is. . . . We have to make compromises on the practical level. They might be painful, but they might not kill the dreams, and they will establish something that by its own presence will gradually create an incentive not to go back to violence."

Barak has made many unsettling and contradictory moves in recent months: he alienated his own supporters even more than he alienated his opponents; he told the Palestinians he would not negotiate in an atmosphere of violence, and then did so; he did not take into sufficient account the mystical attachment many Jews feel toward the Temple Mount. But he also did something almost impossibly brave: He broke, in the words of Shlomo Ben-Ami, the "genetic code" of the Arab-Israeli conflict. He offered the Palestinians much of what they said they wanted. He tested the thesis of the right—that the demands of the Palestinians are never-ending. So far, at least, Arafat, despite an offer last week to hold "marathon" negotiations, has done little to disprove that thesis. Sharon may claim credit for revealing to Israel that the Palestinians weren't ready to make a final deal, but if anyone has lifted the veil it is Barak.

If the Palestinians continue to reject his compromise offers, Barak told me, he could now lead Israelis to war with a clear conscience: "We will be able to look into the eyes of any mother, father, wife, widow, or children or orphans of an Israeli and tell them, 'We are now struggling because we have no choice.' "

Back in November, before Sharon knew that he would be a candidate, I asked him to outline his ideas for peace. He said that he would never divide Jerusalem. The Jordan Valley, a strip of the West Bank that protects Israel's eastern flank, would remain under Israeli Army control, and no settlements would be dismantled. He would try to connect the Arab cities of the West Bank by roads that do not pass through Israeli-held areas. Palestinian refugees, of course, would not be allowed to return to Israel.

And when Arafat rejects this plan?

"He can accept it, reject it—I don't care."

In Sharon's view, the idea that Israel could bring about an end to the conflict was absurd. "You know my position about it," he said, referring to peace. "It cannot be achieved." The best that Israel could hope for now was something akin to a "non-belligerency" pact. In other words, an armed truce. (The idea is not the Likud's alone: several years ago, the spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, told me that although religious beliefs would preclude Palestinians from making a permanent peace with a Jewish state, they would allow for a *hudna*, or truce.)

Sharon seemed bored back then when we spoke of political strategy. But he lit up when I asked him how he would suppress the current uprising. Unlike many defense stategists, he believes that there is a military solution to the problem of Palestinian violence. He was quickly transported back to 1970, when he wiped out terrorism in Gaza.

"You always have to think of new things to do," he told me. "Once, we captured a Lebanese fishing boat. And we filled it with Lebanese food and newspapers and we put our soldiers in it, dressed as Arabs, who spoke Arabic. And they landed on the beach in Gaza, and the Palestinians hid them. They thought they were their people, fugitives. And we were pursuing them ourselves, making believe they were hunted terrorists. The Palestinians took them to meet an important group of terrorists in the northern part of the Gaza district. And when they met them our soldiers killed them. Then they were evacuated out of Gaza. You have to think of things like that. You have to be creative."

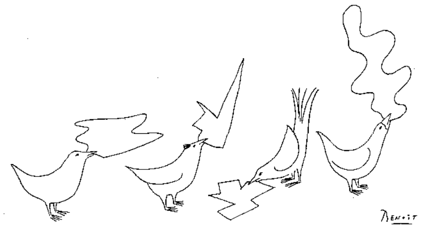
It was Sharon's theory, back in November, that if he became Prime Minister the Arabs would fall into line. "They know what I've been doing all those years," he said ominously. Concessions are fruitless. "Israel will not look good, even if we make all the concessions," he said. "The greater the concessions we make, the harder it will be to look as if we were ever right."

Sharon was blunt on the subject of Arafat. "He's a murderer and a liar," he said. "He's an enemy. He's a bitter enemy." Sharon has devoted a great deal of time and energy to Arafat. By Arafat's own count, Sharon has tried to have him killed thirteen times. Sharon wouldn't fix on a number, but he said the opportunity had arisen repeatedly. "All the governments of Israel for many years, Labor, Likud, all of them, made an effort—and I want to use a subtle word for the American reader—to remove him from our society. We never succeeded."

When I spoke to Sharon a final time, last week, I heard a somewhat different message. In order to win the election, he needs to convince Israelis that he will not lead them into an avoidable war, and so he has become more cautious in his public pronouncements. His campaign slogan now is "Only Sharon Can Bring Peace." A few weeks ago, he sent Arafat holiday greetings to mark the end of Ramadan.

Last week, I asked Sharon if he viewed this election campaign as a chance to redeem himself for Sabra and Shatila.

"I don't have a black cloud over my head," he said. "What I was blamed for is that I did not anticipate that that might happen. But the heads of the Mossad and Military Intelligence also didn't anticipate it. Sabra and Shatila is not the only thing I've done—or not done, as the case is."



I asked him if, as Prime Minister, he would attempt to reoccupy areas now under Palestinian autonomous control. "The things that have been done are irreversible," he said. But when I asked him what he would do if Palestinians used their cities to launch guerrilla attacks on settlements or other Israeli targets, he said, "I'm against escalation, but at the same time I will defend the lives of Israeli citizens. And I don't think I have to elaborate. The Arabs know me. And I know them."

During the fall, Sharon suggested to me more than once that only the strongest measures could possibly avert war. In Ofakim, he told an audience of two hundred Russian immigrants, "Israel is a strong country, but it behaves like a weak country."

The Russians were mostly old and used to being ignored, so this visit by Sharon to their desert outpost was a full-dress occasion; the men had pinned to their suit jackets the medals they won in the Second World War, and the women, thick-legged matrons with gold teeth and rheumy eyes, carried their best purses.

"Tonight, I will speak to you the way a soldier speaks to soldiers," Sharon said. The Russians applauded furiously. "In the past, it was forbidden to lynch Jews in this country. We wouldn't have allowed this then. But do not worry. We will soon return to the way things used to be. We will find ourselves again, and we will learn how to respect ourselves."

Later that evening, he told a group of high-school students, "For you, now is the time for service. Service in the Army, service in the combat units, the Air Force, Intelligence. That's what your role is: to become educated and to serve. That's all I have to say."

One of the students happened to draw Sharon's attention: a seventeen-year-old boy who wore a gold ring in his pierced eyebrow.

"What is that?" Sharon asked, astonished.

The boy mumbled something about self-expression.

"Well, it doesn't matter," Sharon said. He spoke matter-of-factly. "Soon you'll go into the paratroopers, and you'll have to take it out, or else it will get caught in the line of your parachute." ♦

U.S. JOURNAL

THE CHICKEN WARRIORS

A pit-side view of the fight over cockfighting.

BY MARK SINGER

KINGSTON, OKLAHOMA

It's true that I hadn't absolutely made up my mind to join the Oklahoma Gamefowl Breeders Association. Still, I felt let down when, preëmptively, I was deprived of the opportunity. Ever since last winter, after I was nominated but failed to get elected to the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame, I've been looking for ways to pad my résumé in my native state. Which explains, in part, how one Friday morning in mid-December, in the wake of a sleet storm, I wound up driving from Oklahoma City toward Kingston, on the Texas border. Specifically, I was on my way to a two-day cockfighting derby at the members-only Texoma Game Club, where, as I understood the protocols, I'd be expected to pay twenty dollars and pledge allegiance to the Gamefowl Breeders before being allowed inside—never mind that the sum of my avian holdings is a couple of fainthearted parakeets. As I pondered what sorts of friendship I might forge, I weighed some conflicting information I'd received from two reliable sources, both attentive students of the cockfighting subculture.

Janet Halliburton, the chairman of the Oklahoma Coalition Against Cockfighting—a political-action committee pushing for an initiative that, in all likelihood, would result in Oklahoma's becoming the forty-eighth state to outlaw this quaint pastime (Louisiana and New Mexico are the other holdouts)—had suggested, "While you're down there with the cockfighters, make sure you keep an eye out for the guy who showed up to harass me at the state fair in Oklahoma City when I was trying to gather petition signatures. He had the tattoo of a headless nude female torso running from his shoulder to his elbow."

On the other hand, Gregory Albert, an Oklahoma Supreme Court referee who had recently spent a month listening to the sworn testimony of cockfighters determined to defend and preserve their way of life, had told me, "People who engage in cockfighting look just like everybody else. Cockfighters are like the couple next door, or the Waltons. They're just people."

After stopping for a maximum-cholesterol late breakfast—buttered hotcakes and sunny-side ups—at a place called Hobo Joe's, in the blink-and-you-miss-it town of Madill, I travelled ten more miles, until I came upon a gymnasium-size building, with a cream-colored metal exterior, set back about a hundred yards from the highway. No signs identified it as the Texoma Game Club, but I knew from the fence postings that said "Private Property" and "No Trespassing"—the unwelcoming scrutiny of a beady-eyed gatekeeper was another tip-off—that this was the place. Among the curious allurements of the Texoma Game Club is that it's a strictly-within-the-law establishment whose operators have cultivated the coy ambience of a speakeasy.

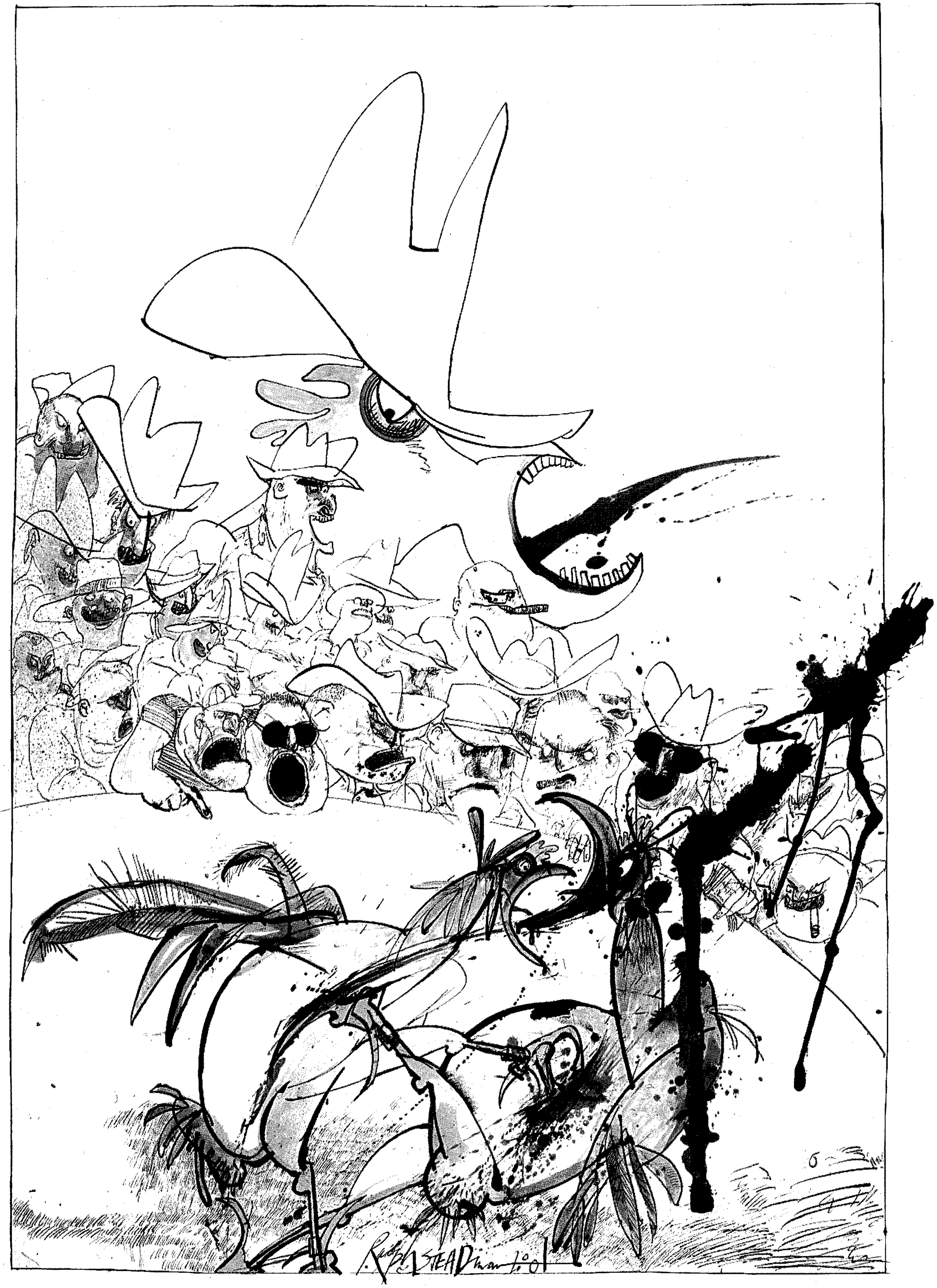
While I waited, the sentry went to find James Tally, the president of the Gamefowl Breeders. He materialized five minutes later, a sallow blond-going-gray fellow in his mid-fifties with a mustache and the slightly mournful demeanor of someone burdened by unwieldy responsibilities. We stepped into a narrow hallway lined with snapshots of cockfighters posing with tournament trophies, and before I realized what was happening—that is, before I had a chance to compromise my professional integrity or even to equivocate—he escorted me past a ticket booth. No one demanded to see proof of my membership in the Gamefowl Breeders Association or the Texoma Game Club. Just like that, dang, I'd been granted journalistic immunity.

Tally, a Union Pacific freight-train conductor who lives not far from Kingston with his wife, two stepchildren, two dogs, three hundred roosters, and seventy-five hens, introduced me to the Texoma owners, a slender white-haired Alabama native named Roy and a straight-talking, compactly built brunette named Judy, who made it clear that they weren't eager to see their last names in print. Then we settled in the stands, where steeply raked rows of cushiony yellow theatre chairs surrounded a dirt-floored, wire-enclosed, eighteen-by-twenty-six-foot fight pit. Occasions arise during the cockfighting season, which runs from November through July, when the Texoma crowds reach capacity—a little over seven hundred—but at the moment the place was less than half filled. Red and silver tinsel and Christmas lights had been strung along the top of the wire cage, a homey touch that went nicely, I thought, with the disingenuous "No Gambling" signs that had been affixed to each of its four sides.

Inside the cage, a couple of black roosters equipped with two-inch stainless-steel weapons on both legs were trying to perform surgery on each other. This was one of seventy or so bouts during what Tally described as "a prelim-type deal," a warmup for the next day's Christmas Derby—a four-cock tournament followed by a seven-cock tournament. The way the scoring worked, not all the livestock would see action; cockfighters who fared poorly in the early rounds would be eliminated, and their remaining birds would, for the time being, be spared. The entry fee was a hundred dollars on Friday and three hundred on Saturday, and the triumphant handlers stood to take home a few thousand dollars, plus or minus their ancillary winnings or losses if, like virtually everyone else on the premises, they neglected to obey the "No Gambling" injunction.

"People who engage in cockfighting look just like everybody else," one observer said. "Like the couple next door, or the Waltons."

Not that cockfighting is mainly



RALPH STEADMAN

about, or really is in any way about, money, I was repeatedly informed; it's about freedom—nowadays, especially, the freedom not to get pushed around by the anti-cockfighting lobby. "We don't solicit people to come to rooster fighting," Roy, the proprietor, said. "People who come, ninety per cent been doin' it all their lives. It's part of our national heritage. I'm gonna bet you there's never been a rooster fighter asked an animal-rights activist to come to a rooster fight, and I'll bet you an animal-rights activist never invited a rooster fighter to one of their events. And that's all right with me. All we want to do is break even: they leave us alone, we leave them alone"—"they" being the Oklahoma Coalition Against Cockfighting and its fellow-travellers, the sinister forces arrayed to try to put out of business Roy and Judy and the forty-one other cockfight-pit operators in Oklahoma, along with countless game-fowl breeders scattered around the state, many of whom had emigrated from jurisdictions where the lawmakers took a dim view of people who amuse themselves by watching animals battle to the death.

I stuck around both days and did witness quite a few cockfights. At one point, with a red Hatch Roundhead and a Hatch Grey cross and their handlers standing poised for battle, and the cacophonous gentlemanly wagering that precedes each fight getting under way ("Bet fifty on the red! . . . Lay a hunnerd to your eighty! . . . Call eighty!"), I felt like an agnostic trying to ignore a gospel choir as I resisted the temptation to do a little gentlemanly wagering myself. But it was mainly the particulars of the fight over cockfighting, rather than cockfighting itself, that interested me.

When Oklahoma joined the union, in 1907, its criminal code, a vestige from territorial days, was generally understood to outlaw cockfighting. Anyone "who maliciously, or for any bet, stake, or reward, instigates or encourages any fight between animals, or instigates or encourages any animal to attack, bite, wound or worry another" was guilty of a misdemeanor. (I recall, from an eighth-grade course in Oklahoma history, that the brave pioneers also made it illegal to get a fish drunk.) The cockfighting ban survived until 1963, when a decision by the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals prevented a county judge from proceeding with the trial of a half-dozen citizens who had been caught in flagrante. The defendants argued, among other things, that the law was insufficiently explicit, and the appellate panel unanimously agreed, establishing the foundation upon which the local cockfighting industry thrives to this day. The opinion, written by the chief judge, Kirksey Nix, remains noteworthy as a novel theological treatise. After quoting Genesis and its delineation of the distinctions between the "fish of the sea" and "the fowl of the air" and "every beast of the field," Judge Nix asked rhetorically, "Is a 'gamecock' an animal?" Though stopping short of a flat-out declaration that it wasn't, he nevertheless found that "persons of ordinary intelligence" could read the law and not necessarily grasp that it covered chickens. What the authors really intended to prohibit, he surmised, was organized dog fighting.

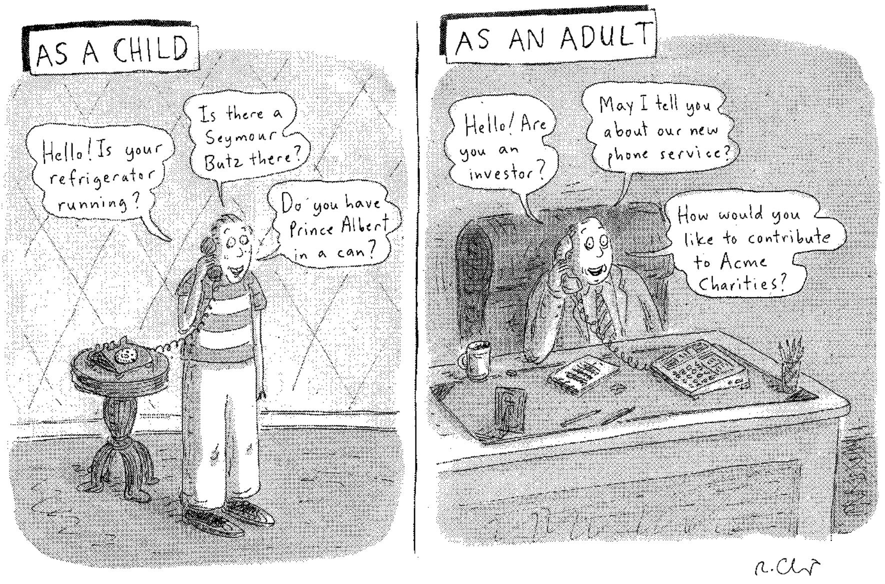
Nix concluded his opinion with the tongue-in-cheek observation "The Legislature is now in session and if it so desires, it can make a direct approach to the act complained of by making cockfighting an offense against the state." Judge Nix knew the tenor of the legislature, an institution in the grip of rural logic, and he understood that a law against cockfighting was as likely to get adopted as a law making Russian the official language. In the decades since, not much has changed. During one memorable debate several years ago, a noble statesman from Muskogee named John Monks declared, "In every country the Communists have taken over, the first thing they do is outlaw cockfighting." The last time the question arose in the legislature, two years ago, it was dead on arrival: an anti-cockfighting bill proposed by a representative from Oklahoma City also would have outlawed such sacrosanct diversions as rodeos, coon hunts, and rattlesnake roundups, and might as well have included football games and church suppers.

Lately, however, the cockfighters have come up against formidable opposition. Oklahoma is one of many states that allow citizen initiatives, a cumbersome constitutional provision that makes it possible to circumvent a recalcitrant legislature. In the fall of 1999, anti-cockfighting canvassers, concentrating their efforts in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, collected signatures endorsing a vote on a proposed new law that would define as felonious behavior just about everything I witnessed at the Texoma Game Club—except for the act of merely being a spectator, which would be a misdemeanor.

When the petition drive ended, the

"The only reason I would take my husband to Paris would be to hide the body."

secretary of state certified that the canvassers had gathered thirty thousand more signatures than were needed to place the question on the ballot in the next statewide general election. (Public-opinion surveys, meanwhile, indicated that two out of three voters favored outlawing cockfighting.) The Gamefowl Breeders Association responded by challenging the validity of tens of thousands of signatures. That the proposed law wasn't voted upon in last November's general election—and may not be in the foreseeable future—is, if you ask most cockfighters, a consequence of their tenacity and organizational skills and the adroitness of their lawyers. The cockfighting opponents are more inclined to attribute the delay to the boorish behavior of certain cockfighters and, above all, foot-dragging by the Oklahoma Supreme Court. This past fall, after a month of hearings, Supreme Court Referee Albert—he of the belief that cockfighters are just like the folks next door—upheld enough of the cockfighters' objections so that, in the end, the petition proponents came up almost eleven thousand short. The anti-cockfighters have formally challenged the referee's decision, and are awaiting a hearing by the full Supreme Court. The cockfighters, naturally, don't see any reason to rush.

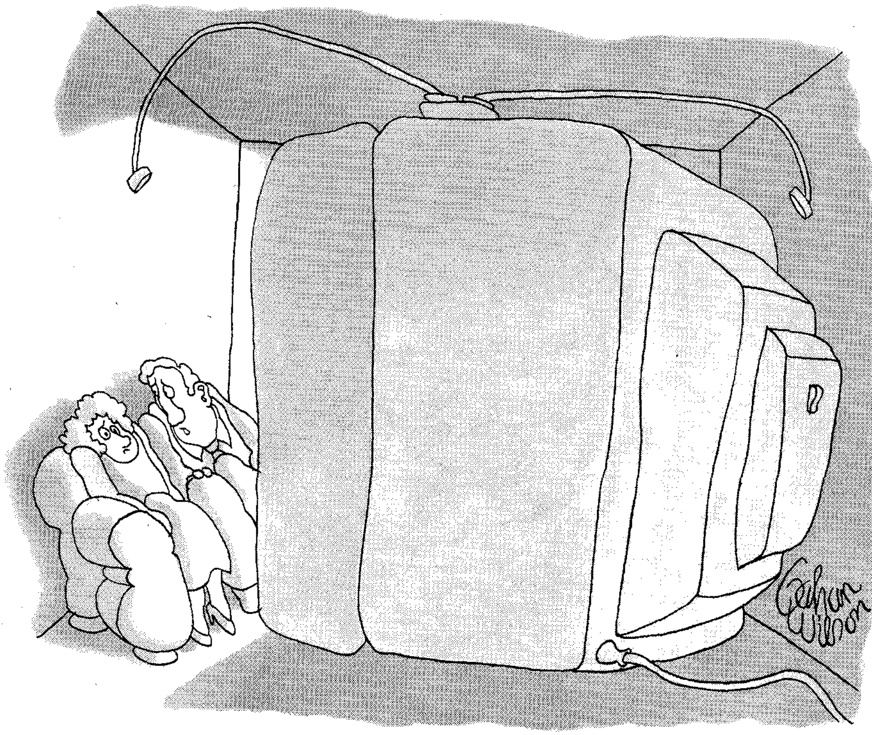

AS A CHILD
Hello! Is your refrigerator running?
Is there a Seymour Butz there?
Do you have Prince Albert in a can?
AS AN ADULT
Hello! Are you an investor?
May I tell you about our new phone service?
How would you like to contribute to Acme Charities?

When Janet Halliburton agreed to become the chairman of the anti-cockfighting campaign, it had nothing to do with the fact that as a child she owned a pet rooster named Ichabod, which died a semi-natural death after "a varmint, most likely a skunk or a badger," invaded the henhouse. Halliburton is somewhere in her forties and has streaked-blond hair and a seeming disinclination to smile. For twenty years—until last spring, when she opted for early retirement—she was the chief counsel of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, which probably accounts for her clipped, coplike diction. In our first conversation, she made a point of telling me, "I used to ride in rodeo barrel races. I love animals, but I regard them as property." She elaborated: "My father's side of the family is from southeastern Oklahoma. We have land there and we run cattle on it . . . steers that are going to be slaughtered. My brother-in-law hunts deer and turkeys on that land. He fishes there, too. I'm not a vegetarian and I don't believe that animals have rights."

Such sentiments might not seem to qualify her as the cockfighters' nemesis, but she is that nevertheless. In the fall of 1998, during a seminar organized by the Oklahoma Humane Federation, an animal-welfare coalition, Halliburton delivered a presentation on the links between violence against animals and human violence. The following spring, the federation, encouraged by successful anti-cockfighting crusades in Missouri and Arizona, decided to mobilize a similar effort in Oklahoma. Precisely because Halliburton didn't fit anyone's stereotype of an animal-rights activist, she was drafted to be chairman. Recently, when I asked whether she regretted having got involved, she said, "It seemed like a sensible thing to do. I thought the cockfighters just had the issue buttonholed in the legislature, and if you give the people a chance to vote they'll solve the problem. But I didn't realize that from A to B was so far."

The moments during the campaign that Halliburton least enjoyed, she says, occurred when petition gatherers were verbally menaced, threatened with physical harm, and spat upon. More than once, her car was followed. One morning, she found a dead rooster in her back yard. She received so many harassing phone calls at home that she had to get an unlisted number. Harassing phone calls at work, including some to her superiors, contributed to her premature retirement. Early in the campaign, she gave an interview to a public-television station in which she alluded to reports that prostitution, illegal gambling, and illicit drugs proliferated in the vicinity of cockfighting pits. These comments prompted two game-fowl breeders to sue her for slander, which she says came as a surprise, because "none of the cockfighters I met impressed me as being public-television watchers." When the anti-cockfighters tried to gather petition signatures at a crafts festival in a suburb of Oklahoma City, a group of cockfighters who didn't resemble the Waltons showed up and the festival manager asked them to leave. "They went away and came back carrying signs that said, 'Don't Ban Cockfighting. Don't Ban Christmas in Schools,' " Halliburton said. "They told people about me, 'She's an atheist and head of the atheist movement in Oklahoma.' At the time, I was a deacon in my church. And my dad's a minister."

Much of this mischief was the handiwork of the Oklahoma Animal Coalition, a splinter faction of rather more militant cockfighters organized by a gung-ho breeder named Chuck Berry, whose general estimation of the Gamefowl Breeders leadership was that it was "unprepared and unmotivated to deal with the problem." The Berry shock troops' standard tactic was to appear at anti-cockfighting rallying spots and in-



"Notice how the more we watch it the bigger it gets?"

• •

tercept potential petition signers, urging them to read carefully what they were about to endorse. The coalition also paid for newspaper ads stating that if the cockfighting opponents succeeded their next endeavor would be to make pet ownership illegal. At Texoma, I met Anthony Villalobos, Jr., one of Berry's cohorts. During an Oktoberfest event at a park in Tulsa, Villalobos recalled, he and a few fellow-tricksters mingled with petition gatherers, some of whom carried "Ban Cockfighting" signs, and held up signs of their own that said "Ban Hunting" and "Ban Fishing."

"They called me the Tulsa Area Harassment Coördinator," he said. "If you want someone harassed in the Tulsa area in a coördinated fashion, I'm the man to see. Just before Thanksgiving, the Tulsa *World* ran an editorial asking both sides to call their troops off, to cool the rhetoric. But then the other side went out and started collecting signatures on Thanksgiving Day. When we found out about it, we had just enough time to finish our turkey and get back out in the streets."

Such stratagems wouldn't have been necessary, the cockfighters say, if their adversaries hadn't stooped to various forms of carpetbagging, including soliciting assistance from subversive organizations like the Humane Society of the United States, raising money from out-of-state animal-protection groups, and employing so-called petition gypsies—itinerant professional canvassers who weren't necessarily legal residents of Oklahoma. In his final report, Supreme Court Referee Albert more or less agreed, invoking the phrase "outside agitators." Despite such xenophobic flourishes, Albert appeared to be evenhanded. He disqualified more than four thousand signatures collected by a petition gypsy who gave as his legal address what turned out to be a vacant lot. But Albert agreed to accept more than seventy-five hundred gathered by a hermit who gave as *his* address an abandoned house. In the end, the majority of the disqualified signatures were tossed out on technical grounds, because the signers' addresses, when compared with those listed in voter-registration records, didn't precisely match.

Game-fowl breeders seem to derive perverse enjoyment from being accused, usually by animal-rights activists, of "training" otherwise pacifist birds to fight. The scientific explanation for combative rooster behavior, they're happy to point out, is rooted in Darwinism and DNA, an inbred male desire to control sexual territory—literally, an uncontrollable urge to impress chicks. And it's not only because humans, when they engage in approximately the same activity, tend not to have sharp weapons strapped to their limbs that their mortality rate is much lower. "A rooster's testosterone level, per body weight, is seventeen times greater than a male *Homo sapiens'*," a breeder named Jimmy Tyler told me. "So they can't help themselves. They're gonna kill one another." Or, as another breeder, Kurt Oleksuk, said as he was on his way to collect his trophy and prize money after winning the four-cock preliminary tournament at Texoma, "Very rarely, you'll get a rooster that won't face, that won't show courage. And if you do an autopsy you'll find that he'll have only one nut or a deformed testicle, in almost every case."

The crowd-stirring action in a cockfight typically occurs in the first thirty seconds. That's when the birds, though aerodynamically ill-equipped for sustained flight, actually do levitate, generally about as high as an average small-college Caucasian basketball player can jump. Most cockfighting pits offer combat with a variety of metal weapons—gaff (sharp point, no cutting edge, worn in pairs), short knife (one inch), and long knife (two inches). The knives are sickle-shaped, are worn on only one leg, and usually have only one edge sharpened: knife duels usually end in swift death for the loser and, quite often, permanent disability for the ostensible winner.

At Texoma, whenever a fight lasted longer than about five minutes, the birds, their handlers, and the referee would shift from the central pit to one of three contiguous combat areas, or drag pits, beneath the grandstand, trailed by spectators with financial interests in the outcome. Some fights went on for almost an hour, adhering to specific and complicated endgame rules. As often as not, the dénouement was the equivalent of a technical knockout: one bird, through injury, fatigue, testosterone deficiency, or perhaps existential despair, couldn't or wouldn't respond to his opponent, who was deemed to possess superior "gameness."

Shortly after nine o'clock the morning of the Christmas Derby, I found James Tally standing in one of the drag pits, looking more preoccupied than usual. He hadn't got much sleep the night before, he said; he had a lot of details on his mind, and at the moment he was struggling with a friend's lively Hatch Grey rooster. The cock wouldn't stop sexually harassing a couple of hens with which it had been sharing a cage, and Tally, wearing a crimson Oklahoma Gamefowl Breeders Association warmup jacket, had the bird under one arm while someone hunted for an extra cage. Hens normally don't make appearances at cockfighting pits, but these were on hand because a brood-stock auction was scheduled for that morning. Several breeders had donated trios, a rooster and two hens, and the proceeds—the trios would bring prices ranging from five hundred to twelve hundred and fifty dollars—would go to the Gamefowl Breeders legal fund.

Before the auction, two attorneys who represented the cockfighters in the initiative-petition challenge, Larry Oliver and Lee Slater, entered the fighting pit and addressed the crowd. Oliver, a broad-shouldered, gray-haired former police officer and the current vice-chief justice of the supreme court of the Creek Nation, wore black jeans, black boots, a red turtleneck, a black ski vest, and a broad-brimmed black cowboy hat with a turquoise hatband, and did most of the talking. "Let me tell you somethin' about my good friend James Tally," he began. "He got me a hotel room last night. I told him this morning I wasn't gonna complain about the water being cold. I wasn't gonna complain about the light that wouldn't turn off, so I had to fish around under the bed to unplug it. But I was gonna complain that there's no girls come with it. . . . Hey, what about those Sooners?"—a reference to the University of Oklahoma's undefeated, Orange Bowl-bound football team—"Tell me about 'em, huh? Aren't they great? Lemme ask you another question: What about those cockfighters? Aren't they great? When the Sooners started their season, nobody thought they'd get anywhere, did they? When y'all started this process, did anybody think you'd get anywhere with it? Both of you are world champions. I think the referee's decision will stand. I've often said, and it's no truer ever before than it is now, there ain't no lawyer any better'n his clients. And you people united and brought yourselves together, and you're the best clients a lawyer could ever expect to have."

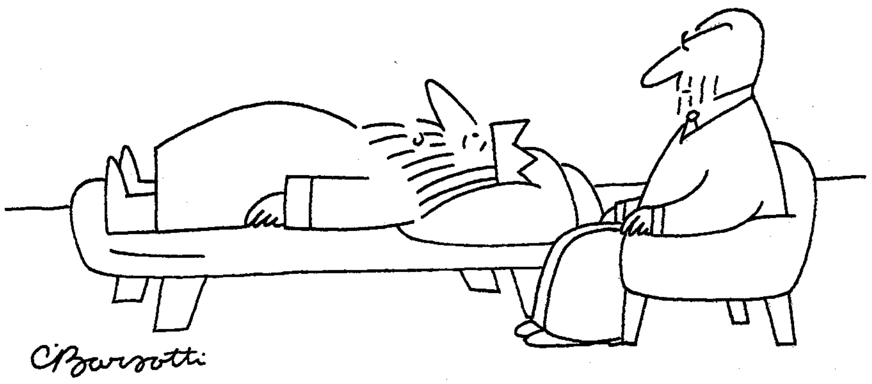
In this upbeat and optimistic spirit, Oliver declined to dwell upon a suggestion he'd floated several months earlier—that, in the event cockfighting was outlawed, the breeders should be compensated for their lost property, and the funds could come from a twenty-five-million-dollar payment due Oklahoma as its share of a multi-state tobacco-litigation settlement. On his way out, Oliver stopped by a table that was selling veterinary supplies—vitamins, hormones, antibiotics, appetite stimulants, parasite treatments—and picked up a jar of something called Cock Booster and another product called Pecker Wrecker. As he paid for them, he told me they were for "friends."

A scoreboard above the bleachers listed the Christmas Derby entries, which were identifiable by their fighting handles—Porkchop, Gunrunner, Showtime, Skeeter, Pinky & The Brain, Cold Blue Steel, Bad Company. There were a hundred and fifteen entries, which I gathered meant that something like fourteen hours of continuous cockfighting lay ahead. I had no illusions that I was game enough to go the distance.

I spent most of the day camped out in a seat in the top row, entertaining the fantasy that there was less cigarette smoke up there. From that vantage point, I could see the feathers fly but couldn't really detect the moment when a spur pierced flesh. And I could avoid the glassy, opaque expression of a bird in extremis. (One breeder assured me that "a rooster doesn't have a fully formed brain, and he doesn't have a pain center." Another cockfighting bromide is that any bird battling for its life in a pit has, up to that point, led a far cushier existence, and possesses the potential for far greater glory, than a factory-raised supermarket-bound Perdue oven stuffer.)

Every ten or so fights, someone would enter the pit, rake the feathers, sprinkle the dirt with a watering can, and draw fresh boundary lines with cornmeal. Somewhat less frequently, Judy would pick up a handheld microphone and threaten to put the hurt to whoever's truck was blocking someone else's out in the parking lot.

In the early evening, I decided to visit the drag pits, and as I passed the veterinary-supply table I heard a woman in lavender stretch pants and a matching sweater and curly red hair that originally belonged to someone else say, "I got me some Viagra. He better come home tonight." It felt like time to hit the road again. I thanked Judy and Roy and James Tally for their hospitality. On my way to my car, I came across an old Buick with the wordiest bumper sticker I'd seen in a long time: "If They Take Our Game Cocks, Next Time They Will Take Our Rodeos, Race Horses, Our Hunting Guns and Shotguns, and Maybe Even Our Fishing Poles!" For a variety of reasons, I doubted that. ◆

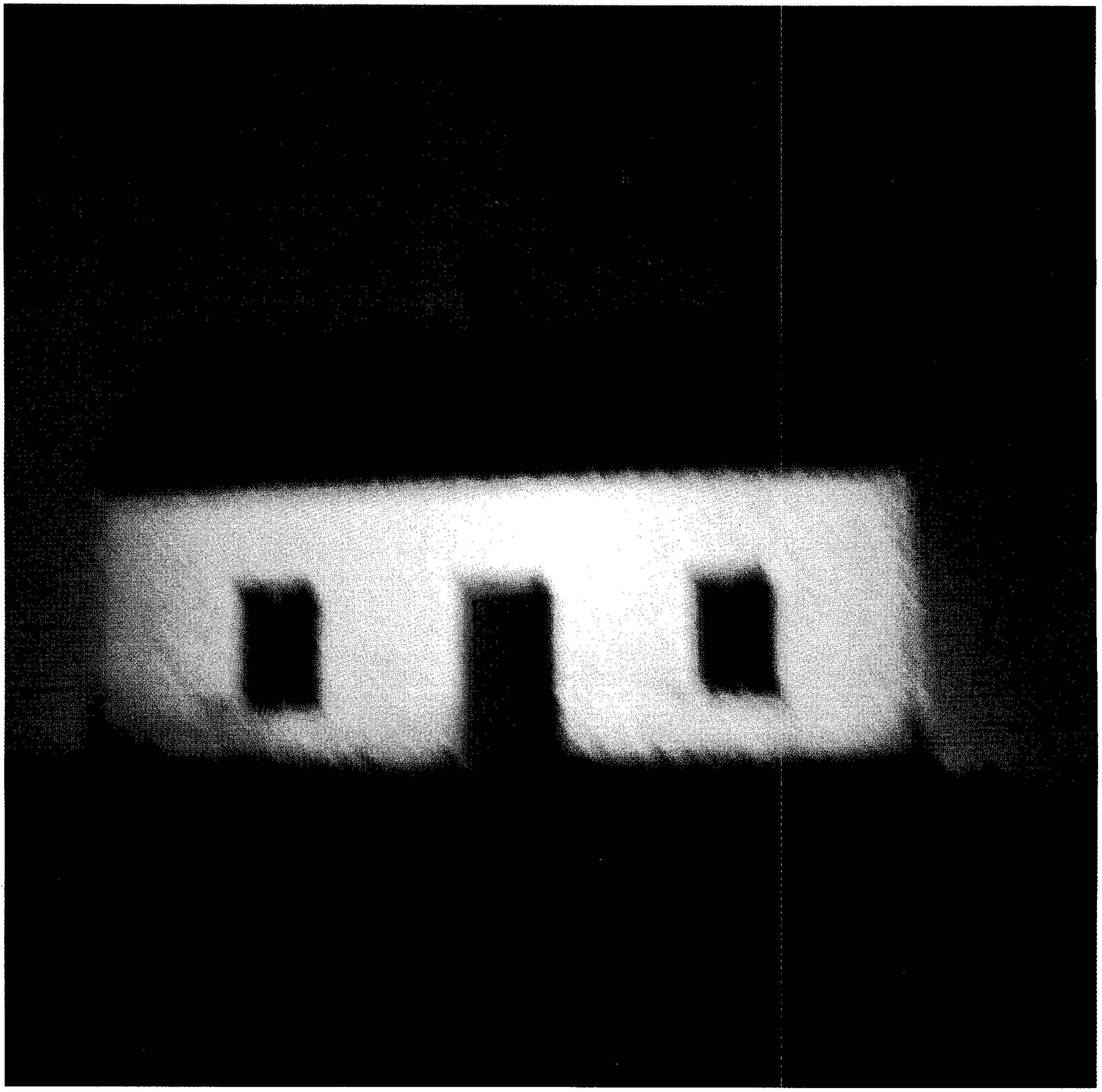


"Well, if you buy the stuff the public-relations people put out, I'm Edward the Great."

FICTION

ALL THAT YOU LOVE WILL BE CARRIED AWAY

BY STEPHEN KING



It was a Motel 6 on I-80 just west of Lincoln, Nebraska. The snow that began at mid-afternoon had faded the sign's virulent yellow to a kinder pastel shade as the light ran out of the January dusk. The wind was closing in on that quality of empty amplification one encounters only in the country's flat midsection, usually in wintertime. That meant nothing but discomfort now, but if big snow came tonight—the weather forecasters couldn't seem to make up their minds—then the interstate would be shut down by morning. That was nothing to Alfie Zimmer.

He got his key from a man in a red vest and drove down to the end of the long cinder-block building. He had been selling in the Midwest for twenty years, and had formulated four basic rules about securing his night's rest. First, always reserve ahead. Second, reserve at a franchise motel if possible—your Holiday Inn, your Ramada Inn, your Comfort Inn, your Motel 6. Third, always ask for a room on the end. That way, the worst you could have was one set of noisy neighbors. Last, ask for a room that begins with a one. Alfie was forty-four, too old to be fucking truck-stop whores, eating chicken-fried steak, or hauling his luggage upstairs. These days, the rooms on the first floor were usually reserved for non-smokers. Alfie rented them and smoked anyway.

Someone had taken the space in front of Room 190. All the spaces along the building were taken. Alfie wasn't surprised. You could make a reservation, guarantee it, but if you arrived late (late on a day like this was after 4 P.M.), you had to park and walk. The cars belonging to the early birds were nestled up to the gray cinder block and the bright-yellow doors in a long line, their windows already covered with a scrim of light snow.

Alfie drove around the corner and parked with the nose of his Chevrolet pointed at the white expanse of some farmer's field, swimming deep into the gray of day's end. At the farthest limit of vision he could see the spark lights of a farm. In there, they would be hunkered down. Out here, the wind blew hard enough to rock the car. Snow skated past, obliterating the farm lights for a few moments.

Alfie was a big man with a florid face and a smoker's noisy respiration. He was wearing a topcoat, because when you were selling that was what people liked to see. Not a jacket. Storekeepers sold to people wearing jackets and John Deere caps, they didn't buy from them. The room key lay on the seat beside him. It was attached to a diamond of green plastic. The key was a real key, not a MagCard. On the radio Clint Black was singing "Nothin' but the Tail Lights." It was a country song. Lincoln had an FM rocker now, but rock-and-roll music didn't seem right to Alfie. Not out here, where if you switched over to AM you could still hear old men calling down hellfire.

He shut off the engine, put the key to 190 in his pocket, and checked to make sure he still had his notebook in there, too. His old pal. "Save Russian Jews," he said, reminding himself. "Collect valuable prizes."

JOHN DOLAN, "BLUE HOUSE" (1996)/COURTESY ROBIN RICE GALLERY

He got out of the car and a gust of wind hit him hard, rocking him back on his heels, flapping his pants around his legs, making him laugh a smoker's surprised rattlebox laugh.

His samples were in the trunk, but he wouldn't need them tonight. No, not tonight, not at all. He took his suitcase and his briefcase out of the back seat, shut the door, then pushed the black button on his key fob. That one locked all the doors. The red one set off an alarm, what you were supposed to use if you were going to get mugged. Alfie had never been mugged. He guessed that few salesmen of gourmet foods were, especially in this part of the country. There was a market for gourmet foods in Nebraska, Iowa, Oklahoma, and Kansas; even in the Dakotas, although many might not believe it. Alfie had done quite well, especially over the last two years as he got to know the market's deeper creases—but it was never going to equal the market for, let's say, fertilizer. Which he could smell even now on the winter wind that was freezing his cheeks and turning them an even darker shade of red.

He stood where he was a moment longer, waiting for the wind to drop. It did, and he could see the spark lights again. The farmhouse. And was it possible that behind those lights, some farmer's wife was even now heating up a pot of Cottager Split Pea Soup or perhaps microwaving a Cottager Shepherd's Pie or Chicken Français? It was. It was as possible as hell. While her husband watched the early news with his shoes off and his sock feet on a hassock, and overhead their son played a video game on his PlayStation and their daughter sat in the tub, chin-deep in fragrant bubbles, her hair tied up with a ribbon, reading "The Golden Compass," by Philip Pullman, or perhaps one of the Harry Potter books, which were favorites of Alfie's daughter, Carlene. All that going on behind the spark lights, some family's universal joint turning smoothly in its socket, but between them and the edge of this parking lot was a mile and a half of flat field, white in the running-away light of a low sky, comatose with the season. Alfie briefly imagined himself walking into that field in his city shoes, his briefcase in one hand and his suitcase in the other, working his way across the frozen furrows, finally arriving, knocking; the door would be opened and he would smell pea soup, that good hearty smell, and hear the KETV (ABC) meteorologist in the other room saying, "But now look at this low-pressure system just coming over the Rockies."

And what would Alfie say to the farmer's wife? That he just dropped by for dinner? Would he advise her to save Russian Jews, collect valuable prizes? Would he begin by saying, "Ma'am, according to at least one source I've read recently, all that you love will be carried away"? That would be a good conversation opener, sure to interest the farmer's wife in the wayfaring stranger who had just walked across her husband's east field to knock on her door. And when she invited him to step in, to tell her more, he could open his briefcase and give her a couple of his sample books, tell her that once she discovered the Cottager brand of quick-serve gourmet delicacies she would almost certainly want to move on to the more sophisticated pleasures of Ma Mère. And, by the way, did she have a taste for caviar? Many did. Even in Nebraska.

Freezing. Standing here and freezing.

He turned from the field and the spark lights at the far end of it and walked to the motel, moving in careful duck steps so he wouldn't go ass over tea kettle. He had done it before, God knew. Whoops-a-daisy in half a hundred motel parking lots. He had done most of it before, actually, and supposed that was at least part of the problem.

There was an overhang, so he was able to get out of the snow. There was a Coke machine with a sign saying, "Use Correct Change." There was an ice machine and a Snax machine with candy bars and various kinds of potato chips behind curls of metal like bedsprings. There was no "Use Correct Change" sign on the Snax machine. From the room to the left of the one where he intended to kill himself, Alfie could hear the early news, but it would sound better in that farmhouse over yonder, he was sure of that. The wind boomed. Snow swirled around his city shoes, and then Alfie let himself into his room. The light switch was to the left. He turned it on and shut the door.

He knew the room; it was the room of his dreams. It was square. The walls were white. On one was a picture of a small boy in a straw hat, asleep with a fishing pole in his hand. There was a green rug on the floor, a quarter inch of some nubbly synthetic stuff. It was cold in here right now, but when he pushed the Hi Heat button on the control panel of the Climatron beneath the window the place would warm up fast. Would probably become hot. A counter ran the length of one wall. There was a TV on it. On top of the TV was a piece of cardboard with "One-Touch Movies!" printed on it.

There were twin double beds, each covered with bright-gold spreads that had been tucked under the pillows and then pulled over them, so the pillows looked like small covered corpses. There was a table between the beds with a Gideon Bible, a TV-channel guide, and a flesh-colored phone on it. Beyond the second bed was the door to the bathroom. When you turned on the light in there, the fan would go on, too. If you wanted the light, you got the fan, too. There was no way around it. The light itself would be fluorescent, with the ghosts of dead flies inside. On the counter beside the sink there would be a hot plate and a Proctor-Silex electric kettle and little packets of instant coffee. There was a smell in here, the mingling of some harsh cleaning fluid and mildew on the shower curtain. Alfie knew it all. He had dreamed it right down to the green rug, but that was no accomplishment, it was an easy dream. He thought about turning on the heater, but that would rattle, too, and, besides, what was the point?

Alfie unbuttoned his topcoat and put his suitcase on the floor at the foot of the bed closest to the bathroom. He put his briefcase on the gold coverlet. He sat down, the sides of his coat spreading out like the skirt of a dress. He opened his briefcase, thumbed through the various brochures, catalogues, and order forms; finally he found the gun. It was a Smith & Wesson revolver, .38 calibre. He put it on the pillows at the head of the bed.

He lit a cigarette, reached for the telephone, then remembered his notebook. He reached into his right coat pocket and pulled it out. It was an old Spiral, bought for a buck forty-nine in the stationery department of some forgotten five-and-dime in Omaha or Sioux City or maybe Jubilee, Kansas. The cover was creased and almost completely innocent of any printing it might once have borne. Some of the pages had pulled partially free of the metal coil that served as the notebook's binding, but all of them were still there. Alfie had been carrying this notebook for almost seven years, ever since his days selling Universal Product Code readers for Simonex.

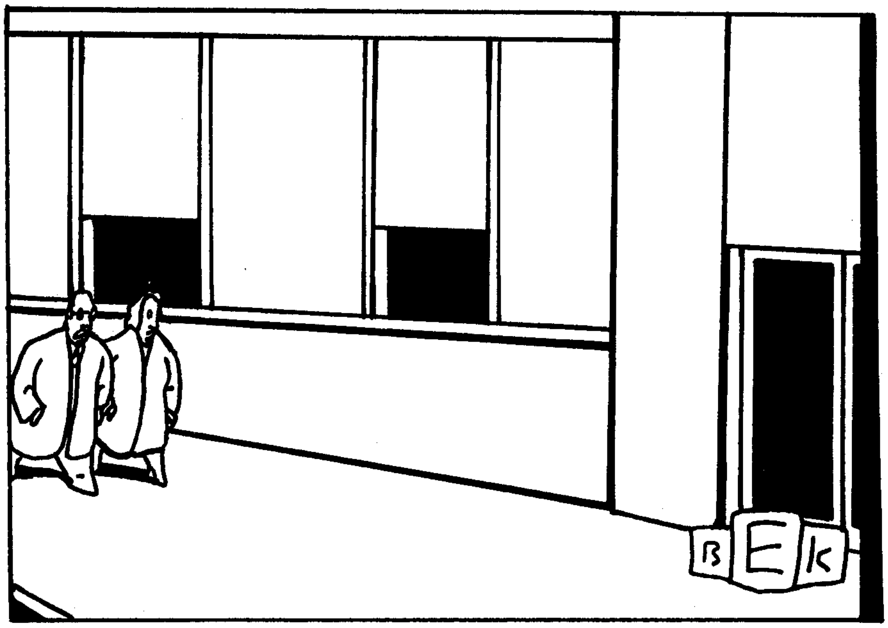
There was an ashtray on the shelf under the phone. Out here, some of the motel rooms still came with ashtrays, even on the first floor. Alfie fished for it, put his cigarette on the groove, and opened his notebook. He flipped through pages written with a hundred different pens (and a few pencils), pausing to read a couple of entries. One read: "I suckt Jim Morrison's cock w/ my poutie boy mouth (LAWRENCE KS)." Restrooms were filled with homosexual graffiti, most of it tiresome and repetitive, but "poutie boy mouth" was pretty good. Another was "Albert Gore is my favorite whore (MURDO S DAK)."

The last page, three-quarters of the way through the book, had just two entries. "Dont chew the Trojan Gum it taste's just like rubber (AVOCA IA)." And: "Poopie doopie you so loopy (PAPILLION NEB)." Alfie was crazy about that one. Something about the "-ie, -ie," and then, boom, you got "-y." It could have been no more than an illiterate's mistake (he was sure that would have been Maura's take on it) but why think like that? What fun was that? No, Alfie preferred (even now) to believe that "-ie, -ie," . . . wait for it . . . "-y" was an intended construction. Something sneaky but playful, with the feel of an e. e. cummings poem.

He rummaged through the stuff in his inside coat pocket, feeling papers, an old toll ticket, a bottle of pills—stuff he had quit taking—and at last finding the pen that always hid in the litter. Time to record today's finds. Two good ones, both from the same rest area, one over the urinal he had used, the other written with a Sharpie on the map case beside the Hav-A-Bite machine. (Snax, which in Alfie's opinion vended a superior product line, had for some reason been disenfranchised in the I-80 rest areas about four years ago.) These days Alfie sometimes went two weeks and three thousand miles without seeing anything new, or even a viable variation on something old. Now, two in one day. Two on the *last* day. Like some sort of omen.

His pen had "COTTAGER FOODS The *Good* Stuff!" written in gold along the barrel, next to the logo, a thatched hut with smoke coming out of the quaintly crooked chimney.

Sitting there on the bed, still in his topcoat, Alfie bent studiously over his old notebook so that his shadow fell on the page. Below "Dont chew the Trojan Gum" and "Poopie doopie you so loopy,"



"I don't mind if something's Shakespearean, just as long as it's not Shakespeare."

Alfie added "Save Russian Jews, collect valuable prizes (WALTON NEB)" and "All that you love will be carried away (WALTON NEB)." He hesitated. He rarely added notes, liking his finds to stand alone. Explanation rendered the exotic mundane (or so he had come to believe; in the early years he had annotated much more freely), but from time to time a footnote still seemed to be more illuminating than demystifying.

He starred the second entry—"All that you love will be carried away (WALTON NEB)"—and drew a line two inches above the bottom of the page, and wrote: "*To read this you must also look at the exit ramp from the Walton Rest Area back to highway, i.e. at departing transients."

He put the pen back in his pocket, wondering why he or anyone would continue anything this close to ending everything. He couldn't think of a single answer. But of course you went on breathing, too. You couldn't stop it without rough surgery.

The wind gusted outside. Alfie looked briefly toward the window, where the curtain (also green, but a different shade from the rug) had been drawn. If he pulled it back, he would be able to see chains of light on Interstate 80, each bright bead marking sentient beings running on the rod of the highway. Then he looked back down at his book. He meant to do it, all right. This was just . . . well . . .

"Breathing," he said, and smiled. He picked his cigarette out of the ashtray, smoked, returned it to the groove, and thumbed back through the book again. The entries recalled thousands of truck stops and roadside chicken shacks and highway rest areas the way certain songs on the radio can bring back specific memories of a place, a time, the person you were with, what you were drinking, what you were thinking.

"Here I sit, brokenhearted, tried to shit but only farted." Everyone knew that one, but here was an interesting variation from Double D Steaks in Hooker, Oklahoma: "Here I sit, I'm at a loss, trying to shit out taco sauce. I know I'm going to drop a load, only hope I don't explode." And from Casey, Iowa, where SR 25 crossed I-80: "My mother made me a whore." To which someone had added in very different penmanship: "If I supply the yarn will she make me one?"

He had started collecting when he was selling the UPCs, noting various bits of graffiti in the Spiral notebook without at first knowing why he was doing it. They were just amusing, or disconcerting, or both at the same time. Yet little by little he had become fascinated with these messages from the interstate, where the only other communications seemed to be dipped headlights when you passed in the rain, or maybe somebody in a bad mood flipping you the bird when you went by in the passing lane pulling a rooster-tail of snow behind you. He came gradually to see—or perhaps only to hope—that something was going on here. The e. e. cummings lilt of "Poopie doopie you so loopy," for instance, or the inarticulate rage of "1380 West Avenue kill my mother TAKE HER JEWELS."

Or take this oldie: "Here I sit, cheeks a-flexin', giving birth to another Texan." The metre, when you considered it, was odd. Not iambs but some odd triplet formula with the stress on the third: "Here I *sit*, cheeks a-*flex*in', giving *birth* to a*noth*er *Tex*an." O.K., it broke down a little at the end, but that somehow added to its memorability, gave it that final mnemonic twist of the tail. He had thought on many occasions that he could go back to school, take some courses, get all that feet-and-metre stuff down pat. Know what he was talking about instead of running on a tightrope of intuition. All he really remembered clearly from school was iambic pentameter: "To be or not to be, that is the question." He had seen that in a men's room on I-70, actually, to which someone had added, "The real question is who your father was, dipstick."

These triplets, now. What were *they* called? Was that trochaic? He didn't know. The fact that he could find out no longer seemed important, but he could find out, yes. It was something people taught; it was no big secret.

Or take this variation, which Alfie had also seen all over the country: "Here I sit, on the pooper, giving birth to a Maine state trooper." It was always Maine, no matter where you were it was always Maine State Trooper, and why? Because no other state would scan. Maine was the only one of the fifty whose name

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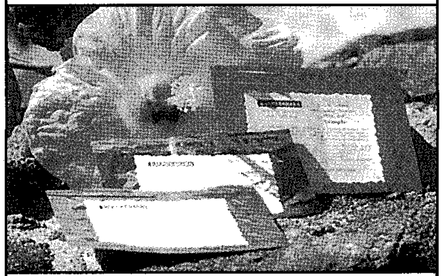

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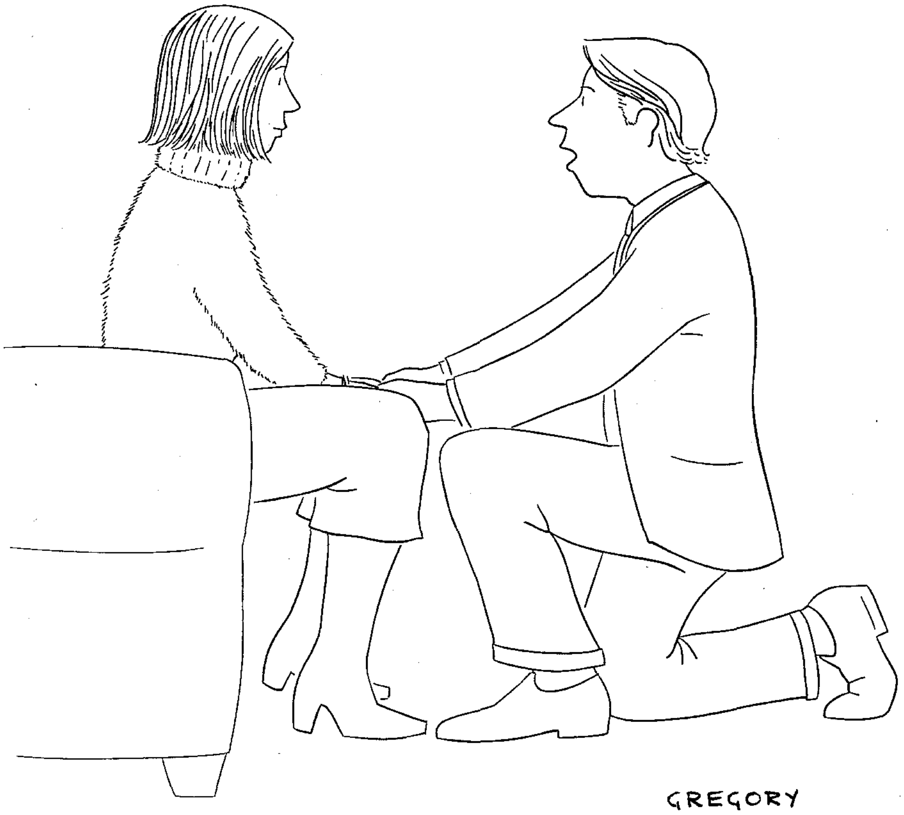


"Emily, I want you to be the mother who hires the nanny of my children."

consisted of a single syllable. Yet again, it was in triplets: "Here I *sit*, on the *poop*er."

He had thought of writing a book. Just a little one. The first title to occur to him had been "Don't Look up Here, You're Pissing on Your Shoes," but you couldn't call a book that. Not and reasonably hope someone would put it out for sale in a store, anyway. And, besides, that was light. Frothy. He had become convinced over the years that something was going on here, and it wasn't frothy. The title he had finally decided on was an adaptation of something he'd seen in a rest-area toilet stall outside Fort Scott, Kansas, on Highway 54. "I Killed Ted Bundy: The Secret Transit Code of America's Highways." By Alfred Zimmer. That sounded mysterious and ominous, almost scholarly. But he hadn't done it. And although he had seen "If I supply the yarn, will she make me one" added to "My mother made me a whore" all over the country, he had never expounded (at least in writing) on the startling lack of sympathy, the "just deal with it" sensibility, of the response. Or what about "Mammon is the King of New Jersey"? How did one explain why New Jersey made it funny and the name of some other state probably wouldn't? Even to try seemed almost arrogant. He was just a little man, after all, with a little man's job. He sold things. A line of frozen dinners, currently.

And now, of course . . . now . . .

Alfie took another deep drag on his cigarette, mashed it out, and called home. He didn't expect to get Maura and didn't. It was his own recorded voice that answered him, ending with the number of his cell phone. A lot of good that would do; the cell phone was in the trunk of the Chevrolet, broken. He had never had good luck with gadgets.

After the beep he said, "Hi, it's me. I'm in Lincoln. It's snowing. Remember the casserole you were going to take over to my mother. She'll be expecting it. And she asked for the Red Ball coupons. I know you think she's crazy on that subject, but humor her, O.K.? She's old. Tell Carlene Daddy says hi." He paused, then for the first time in about five years added, "I love you."

He hung up, thought about another cigarette—no worries about lung cancer, not now—and decided against it. He put the notebook, open to the last page, beside the telephone. He picked up the gun and rolled out the cylinder. Fully loaded. He snapped the cylinder back in with a flick of his wrist, then slipped the short barrel into his mouth. It tasted of oil and metal. He thought, *Here I* SIT, *about to* COOL it, *my plan to* EAT *a fuckin'* BOOL-*it.* He grinned around the barrel. That was terrible. He never would have written that down in his book.

Then another thought occurred to him and he put the gun back in its trench on the pillow, drew the phone to him again, and once more dialled home. He waited for his voice to recite the useless cell-phone number, then said, "Me again. Don't forget Rambo's appointment at the vet day after tomorrow, O.K.? Also the sea-jerky strips at night. They really do help his hips. Bye."

He hung up and raised the gun again. Before he could put the barrel in his mouth, his eye fell on the notebook. He frowned and put the gun down. The book was open to the last four entries. The first thing anyone responding to the shot would see would be his dead body, sprawled across the bed closest to the bathroom, his head hanging down and bleeding on the nubbly green rug. The second thing, however, would be the Spiral notebook, open to the final written page.

Alfie imagined some cop, some Nebraska state trooper who would never be written about on any bathroom wall due to the disciplines of scansion, reading those final entries, perhaps turning the battered old notebook toward him with the tip of his own pen. He would read the first three entries—"Trojan Gum," "Poopie doopie," "Save Russian Jews"—and dismiss them as insanity. He would read the last line, "All that you love will be carried away," and decide that the dead guy had regained a little rationality at the end, just enough to write a halfway sensible suicide note.

Alfie didn't like the idea of people thinking he was crazy (further examination of the book, which contained such information as "Medgar Evers is alive and well in Disneyland," would only confirm that impression). He was not crazy, and the things he had written here over the years weren't crazy, either. He was convinced of it. And if he was wrong, if these were the rantings of lunatics, they needed to be examined even more closely. That thing about don't look up here, you're pissing on your shoes, for instance, was that humor? Or a growl of rage?

He considered using the john to get rid of the notebook, then shook his head. He'd end up on his knees with his shirtsleeves rolled back, fishing around in there, trying to get the damn thing back out. While the fan rattled and the fluorescent buzzed. And although immersion might blur some of the ink, it wouldn't blur all of it. Not enough. Besides, the notebook had been with him so long, riding in his pocket across so many flat and empty Midwest miles. He hated the idea of just flushing it away.

The last page, then? Surely one page, balled up, would go down. But that would leave the rest for them (there was always a them) to discover, all that clear evidence of an unsound mind. They'd say, "Lucky he didn't decide to visit a schoolyard with an AK-47. Take a bunch of little kids with him." And it would follow Maura like a tin can tied to a dog's tail. "Did you hear about her husband?" they'd ask each other in the supermarket. "Killed himself in a motel. Left a book full of crazy stuff. Lucky he didn't kill *her*." Well, he could afford to be a little hard about that. Maura was an adult, after all. Carlene, on the other hand . . . Carlene was . . .

Alfie looked at his watch. At her j.-v. basketball game, that's where Carlene was right now. Her teammates would say most of the same things the supermarket ladies would say, only within earshot and accompanied by those chilling seventh-grade giggles. Eyes full of glee and horror. Was that fair? No, of course not, but there was nothing fair about what had happened to him, either. Sometimes when you were cruising along the highway, you saw big curls of rubber that had unwound from the recap tires some of the independent truckers used. That was what he felt like now: thrown tread. The pills made it worse. They cleared your mind just enough for you to see what a colossal jam you were in.

"But I'm not crazy," he said. "That doesn't make me crazy." No. Crazy might actually be better.

Alfie picked up the notebook, flipped it closed much as he had flipped the cylinder back into the .38, and sat there tapping it against his leg. This was ludicrous.

Ludicrous or not, it nagged him. The way thinking a stove burner might still be on sometimes nagged him when he was home, nagged until he finally got up and checked and found it cold. Only this was worse. Because he loved the stuff in the notebook. Amassing graffiti—thinking about graffiti—had been his real work these last years, not selling price-code readers or frozen dinners that were really not much more than Swansons or Freezer Queens in fancy microwavable dishes. The daffy exuberance of "Helen Keller fucked her feller!" Yet the notebook might be a real embarrassment once he was dead. It would be like accidentally hanging yourself in the closet because you were experimenting with a new way of jacking off and got found that way with your shorts under your feet and shit on your ankles. Some of the stuff in his notebook might show up in the newspaper, along with his picture. Once upon a time he would have scoffed at the idea, but in these days, when even Bible Belt newspapers routinely speculated about a mole on the President's penis, the notion was hard to dismiss.

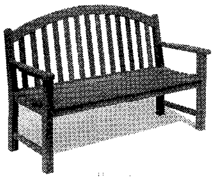
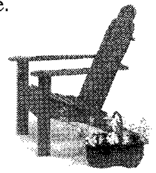
Burn it, then? No, he'd set off the God-damned smoke detector.

Put it behind the picture on the wall? The picture of the little boy with the fishing pole and the straw hat?

Alfie considered this, then nodded slowly. Not a bad idea at all. The Spiral notebook might stay there for years. Then, someday in the distant future, it would drop out. Someone—perhaps a lodger, more likely a maid—would pick it up, curious. Would flip through it. What would that person's reaction be? Shock? Amusement? Plain old head-scratching puzzlement? Alfie rather hoped for this last. Because things in the notebook were puzzling. "Elvis killed Big Pussy," someone in Hackberry Chalk, Texas, had written. "Serenity is being square," someone in Rapid City, South Dakota, had opined. And below that, someone had written, "No, stupid, serenity= $(va)^2+b$, if v=serenity, a=satisfaction and b=sexual compatibility."

Behind the picture, then.

Alfie was halfway across the room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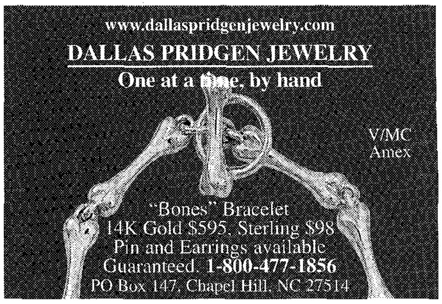
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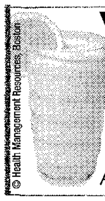
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when he remembered the pills in his coat pocket. And there were more in the glove compartment of the car, different kinds but for the same thing. They were prescription drugs, but not the sort the doctor gave you if you were feeling . . . well . . . sunny. So the cops would search this room thoroughly for other kinds of drugs and when they lifted the picture away from the wall the notebook would drop out onto the green rug. The things in it would look even worse, even crazier, because of the pains he had taken to hide it.

And they'd read the last thing as a suicide note, simply because it *was* the last thing. No matter where he left the book, that would happen. Sure as shit sticks to the ass of America, as some East Texas turnpike poet had once written.

"If they find it," he said, and just like that the answer came to him.

The snow had thickened, the wind had grown even stronger, and the spark lights across the field were gone. Alfie stood beside his snow-covered car at the edge of the parking lot with his coat billowing out in front of him. At the farm, they'd all be watching TV by now. The whole fam'damly. Assuming the satellite dish hadn't blown off the barn roof, that was. Back at his place, his wife and daughter would be arriving home from Carlene's basketball game. Maura and Carlene lived in a world that had little to do with the interstates, or fast food boxes blowing down the breakdown lanes and the sound of semis passing you at seventy and eighty and even ninety miles an hour like a Doppler whine. He wasn't complaining about it (or hoped he wasn't); he was just pointing it out. "Nobody here even if there is," someone in Chalk Level, Missouri, had written on a shithouse wall, and sometimes in those rest-area bathrooms there was blood, mostly just a little, but once he had seen a grimy basin under a scratched steel mirror half filled with it. Did anyone notice? Did anyone report such things?

In some rest areas the weather report fell constantly from overhead speakers, and to Alfie the voice giving it sounded haunted, the voice of a ghost running through the vocal cords of a corpse. In Candy, Kansas, on Route 283, in Ness County, someone had written, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," to which someone else had added, "If your not from Pudlishers Cleering House go away you Bad Boy."

Alfie stood at the edge of the pavement, gasping a little because the air was so cold and full of snow. In his left hand he held the Spiral notebook, bent almost double. There was no need to destroy it, after all. He would simply throw it into Farmer John's east field, here on the west side of Lincoln. The wind would help him. The notebook might carry twenty feet on the fly, and the wind could tumble it even farther before it finally fetched up against the side of a furrow and was covered. It would lie there buried all winter, long after his body had been shipped home. In the spring, Farmer John would come out this way on his tractor, the cab filled with the music of Patty Loveless or George Jones or maybe even Clint Black, and he would plow the Spiral notebook under without seeing it and it would disappear into the scheme of things. Always supposing there was one. "Relax, it's all just the rinse cycle," someone had written beside a pay phone on I-35 not far from Cameron, Missouri.

Alfie drew the book back to throw it, then lowered his arm. He hated to let it go, that was the truth of it. That was the bottom line everyone was always talking about. But things were bad, now. Everything looked like highways to him now. He raised his arm again and then lowered it again. In his distress and indecision he began to cry without being aware of it. The wind rushed around him, on its way to wherever. He couldn't go on living the way he had been living, he knew that much. Not one more day. And a shot in the mouth would be easier than any living change, he knew that, too. Far easier than struggling to write a book few people (if any at all) were likely to read. He raised his arm again, cocked the hand with the notebook in it back to his ear like a pitcher preparing to throw a fastball, then stood like that. An idea had occurred to him. He would count to sixty. If the spark lights of the farmhouse reappeared at any time during that count, he would try to write the book.

To write a book like that, he thought, you'd have to begin by talking about how it was to measure distance in green mile markers, and the very width of the land, and how the wind sounded when you got out of your car at one of those rest areas in Oklahoma or North Dakota. How it sounded almost like words. You'd have to tell about the silence, and how the bathrooms always smelled of piss and the great hollow farts of departed travellers, and how in that silence the voices on the walls began to speak. The voices of those who had written and then moved on. The telling would hurt, but if the wind dropped and the spark lights of the farm came back, he'd do it anyway.

If they didn't, he'd throw the notebook into the field, go back into room 190 (just hang a left at the Snax machine), and shoot himself, after all.

Either way. Either way.

Alfie stood there counting to sixty inside his head, waiting to see if the wind would drop. ◆

PRAYER ("FROM BEHIND TREES")

The branchful of dried leaves blown about at the center
of the road, turning on itself is it a path:
snake: gray-brown updrafting: drama:
whole affair played out between wind's quiver, wind's
dusty haste, an almost impeccable procedure,
bit of scenery from which all fear
is deleted. So it
is right here, where I am peering, where I am supposed to discern,
how the new gods walk behind the old gods at the suitable distance.

—*Jorie Graham*

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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THIS LONESOME PLACE

Flannery O'Connor on race and religion in the unreconstructed South.

BY HILTON ALS

The two niggers, a man and a woman, cutting across the field are looking for a little moonshine when they spot the white boy, Francis Marion Tarwater—the teen-age antihero of Flannery O'Connor's startling second novel, "The Violent Bear It Away"—who is digging a grave for his great-uncle Mason. Mason, a self-titled prophet who spent his life denouncing the world for having forsaken its Saviour, believed that Tarwater might have the calling, too, but the boy is not feeling his religion right now, standing in the dirt, just this side of death. O'Connor writes:

> The woman, tall and Indianlike, had on a green sun hat. She stooped under the fence without pausing and came on across the yard toward the grave; the man held the wire down and swung his leg over and followed at her elbow. They kept their eyes on the hole and stopped at the edge of it, looking down into the raw ground with shocked satisfied expressions. The man, Buford, had a crinkled face, darker than his hat. "Old man passed," he said.
>
> The woman lifted her head and let out a slow sustained wail, piercing and formal. She . . . crossed her arms and then lifted them in the air and wailed again.
>
> "Tell her to shut up that," Tarwater said. "I'm in charge here now and I don't want no nigger-mourning."
>
> "I seen his spirit for two nights," she said. "Seen him two nights and he was unrested."
>
> "He ain't been dead but since this morning," Tarwater said. . . .
>
> "He'd been predicting his passing for many years," Buford said. "She seen him in her dream several nights and he wasn't rested. . . ."
>
> "Poor sweet sugar boy," the woman said to Tarwater, "what you going to do here now by yourself in this lonesome place?"

Published in 1960, "The Violent Bear It Away" appeared just as Martin Luther King, Jr., was cutting a large revolutionary swath through the Old South, and only six years after Brown v. Board of Education, when that little black girl in sunglasses had her face dotted with the spittle of her white countrymen in Little Rock. The South may indeed have seemed like a "lonesome place" to whites then. Integration was not going slow, as William Faulkner had said it should (to which Thurgood Marshall responded, "They don't mean go slow, they mean don't go"). And, in order to move into a modern South, whites would need to be less encumbered by the old ways: by manners, by the Christian charity and moral rectitude of colored life—the "nigger-mourning" that cut to the soul.

Race and faith and their attendant hierarchies and delusions are O'Connor's great themes. She has been hailed for her artistic and social independence, but readings of this American master often overlook the originality and honesty of her portrayal of Southern whiteness. Or, rather, Southern whiteness as it chafed under its biggest cultural influence—Southern blackness. It's remarkable to consider that O'Connor started writing less than a hundred years after Harriet Beecher Stowe published "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and just a decade after Margaret Mitchell's "Gone with the Wind," two books whose imagined black worlds had more to do with their authors' patronizing sentimentality than with the complicated intertwining of black and white, rich and poor, mundane and sublime which characterized real Southern life—and O'Connor's portrait of it. Her black characters are not symbols defined in opposition to whiteness; they are the living people who were, physically at least, on the periphery of O'Connor's own world. She was not romantic enough to take Faulkner's Dilsey view of blacks—as the fulcrum of integrity and compassion. She didn't use them as vessels of sympathy or scorn; she simply—and complexly—drew from life.

Flannery O'Connor's electric vision is still surprising enough, seventy-five years after her birth, to have inspired five new critical studies last year alone—the most compelling of which are Richard Giannone's "Flannery O'Connor, Hermit Novelist" and Lorine M. Getz's "Flannery O'Connor, Literary Theologian." Yet there is no definitive biography, and one hesitates to read her fiction autobiographically, since the approach was not one that O'Connor had much patience for. "I know some folks that don't mind thier own bisnis," she wrote when she was twelve. Eighteen years later, she elaborated, in a letter to a friend, explaining why she had no interest in representing herself in her writing:

> To say that any complete denudation of the writer occurs in the successful work is, according to me, a romantic exaggeration. A great part of the art of it is precisely in seeing that this does not happen. . . . Everything has to be subordinated to a whole which is not you. Any story I reveal myself completely in will be a bad story.

From the beginning, O'Connor worked to alchemize her background into something beyond mere anecdote and eccentricity. Born in 1925, in Savannah, Georgia, she was baptized Mary Flannery O'Connor at the Catholic Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. The Church's sanctioning of mysticism would later have a profound influence on O'Connor's writing, but Catholicism was a faith that had little sway in the "Christ-haunted" South O'Connor grew up in—a place where Jesus *was* God. Savannah had been settled first by Episcopalians and Lutherans, then by Baptists and Methodists; Catholics were excluded from the state's charter until 1794, and were thereafter rarely regarded as anything but an itinerant non-Reformed

"I am a Catholic . . . possessed of the modern consciousness, that thing Jung describes as . . . solitary, and guilty," O'Connor wrote.

JOE DE CASSERES

sect, as alien a presence as the Jews. ("That must be Jew singing," someone scoffs when two Catholic girls sing Psalms, in the 1954 O'Connor short story "A Temple of the Holy Ghost.")

O'Connor was the only child of Regina Cline and Edward O'Connor, a real-estate agent who aspired to be a writer. Both parents were descended from Irish Catholic immigrants, and Mary Flannery began her studies at the St. Vincent's Grammar School. Even as a child, she had a merciless view of things, and her plain speech won her unwelcome attention from the Sisters of Mercy who provided her instruction. She grew up loving birds, and she favored chickens with mismatched eyes or crooked combs. When she was five, she raised a "frizzled" chicken (its feathers grew backward), which she taught to walk backward. A New York-based newsreel company that specialized in natural phenomena heard about the bird and sent a crew to O'Connor's home to film it—"an experience that marked me for life," she said later. The crew's visit provided her with the first approval of her obsession with the grotesque as it lives beside the normal: a frizzled chicken striding backward in the yard while Mother airs out a tablecloth and Father closes the shed door, axe in one hand, wiping the sweat from the back of his neck with the other.

American genius often feeds on its own environs, and O'Connor was no exception. "I'm pleased to live in Baldwin County in the sovereign state of Georgia, and to see what I can from here," she told one interviewer. She knew where her material was, and had known it since she was twelve. By then, she had discovered the tone of her voice, too, its lyrical flatness and its wildly leaping humor. ("If I . . . tried to write a story about the Japanese, the characters would all talk like Herman Talmadge," she once said.) O'Connor was already slipping verse under her father's napkin at the table and rejecting books that didn't satisfy her interest in the heretical. "Awful. I wouldn't read this book," she wrote in her copy of "Alice in Wonderland." In a copy of "Georgina Finds Herself," by Shirley Watkins: "This is the worst book I ever read next to 'Pinnochio.' " About her early reading, O'Connor wrote to a friend, in 1955:

> The only good things I read when I was a child were the Greek and Roman myths which I got out of a set of a child's encyclopedia. . . . The rest of what I read was Slop with a capital S. The Slop period was followed by the Edgar Allan Poe period which lasted for years and consisted chiefly in a volume called "The Humerous Tales of E. A. Poe." These were mighty humerous—one about a young man who was too vain to wear his glasses and consequently married his grandmother by accident; another about a fine figure of a man who in his room removed wooden arms, wooden legs, hair piece, artificial teeth, voice box, etc.

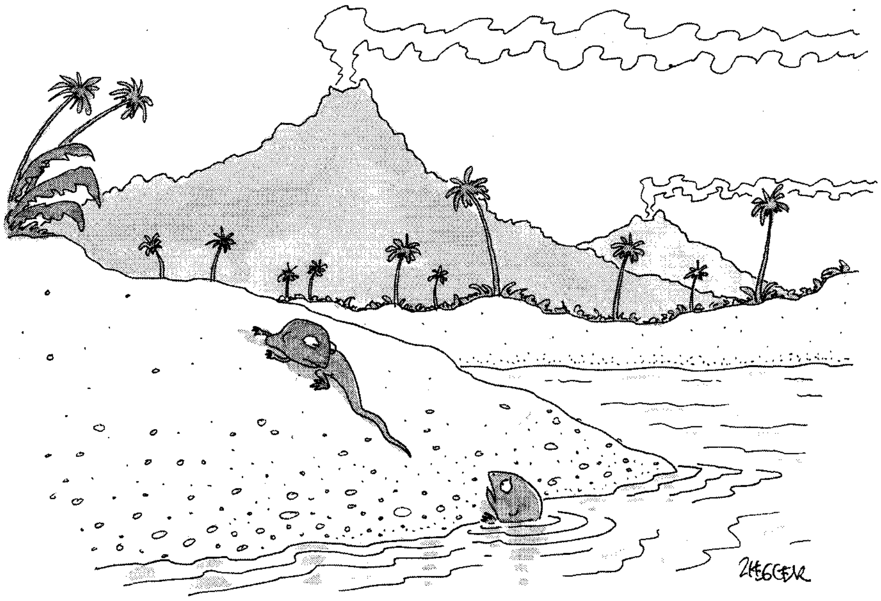
From the beginning of her reading life, O'Connor preferred stories that were direct in their telling and mysterious only in their subtexts. She clearly despised the lack of clarity which she believed came with Northern liberalism, and which she lampoons with her intellectual characters, who always function in a kind of godless oligarchy. In many of her stories, intellectuals are depicted as grumpy poseurs, mean and homely failures who can't get on with life and are often driven into the ground by its brutality. O'Connor was like her chicken, walking backward, staring at others as she removed herself from them.

In 1938, after Edward O'Connor was appointed a zone real-estate appraiser for the Federal Housing Administration in Atlanta, Regina and Flannery moved into the Cline family house, in the nearby town of Milledgeville, where Edward could visit on the weekends. There was no parochial education for Flannery in Milledgeville, the home of the state insane asylum. (She eventually graduated from the experimental Peabody High School.) And, soon after the move, Edward's health began to deteriorate. He was suffering from lupus, a disease in which the body attacks its own tissues, destroying itself. Fifteen years after her father's death, in 1941, O'Connor wrote to her friend Elizabeth Hester, a clerk at a credit bureau in Atlanta, who was a frequent correspondent during the last nine years of O'Connor's life, and whose identity was only recently revealed:

> My father wanted to write but had not the time or money or training or any of the opportunities I have had. . . . Anyway, whatever I do in the way of writing makes me extra happy in the thought that it is a fulfillment of what he wanted to do himself.

That fulfillment came relatively quickly. In 1945, shortly before completing her A.B. at the Georgia State College for Women, O'Connor was admitted to the State University of Iowa with a scholarship in journalism. O'Connor had clear, pale skin, a heart-shaped face, lively eyes, and a thick Georgia accent. In a letter to the editor Robert Giroux, Paul Engle, then the director of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, recalls meeting her that fall and being unable to understand her speech: "Embarrassed, I asked her to write down what she had just said on a pad. She wrote: 'My name is Flannery O'Connor. I am not a journalist. Can I come to the Writers' Workshop?' " Engle continued:

> Like Keats, who spoke Cockney but wrote the purest sounds in English, Flannery spoke a dialect beyond instant comprehension but on the page her prose was imaginative, tough, alive. . . . Sitting at the back of the room silent, Flannery was more of a presence than the exuberant talkers who serenade every writing-class with their loudness.



"If Mom catches us out here, we're really gonna get it!"

O'Connor rarely, if ever, discussed her "bisnis"—her religion, her writing, her Southernness—with her peers in Iowa. One classmate claims not to have realized that O'Connor "really did believe in evil and damnation and redemption," until she produced a story that showed insight into a character's fall. O'Connor's parochialism might have been a defense, the armor she used to shield herself from other people, but she also seemed to view it as someone else's problem; she knew who she was and where she was going. Iowa, at least, provided her with a new perspective on the cryptic idea of home.

At the end of her first semester at Iowa, O'Connor published her first story, "The Geranium," in *Accent*. The story focusses on an enfeebled man named Old Dudley, who is living up North with his daughter and her family but wants to go back home to the South to die, near the "niggers" who are kinder to the old man than his own children. O'Connor reworked the story several times after its first publication, but already, at twenty-one, she had found many of her mature themes: the skewering of tradition, the erosion of one world that, disastrously, comically, is the weak foundation of the next, and the spectacle of blacks and whites regarding each other across a divide of mutual outsiderness.

O'Connor was not a polemicist, but her work is implicitly political, given the environment she drew from—the South during its second failed attempt at Re-construction, otherwise known as Integration. As she wrote in an essay titled “The Regional Writer,” “Southern identity is not really connected with mocking birds and beaten biscuits and white columns any more than it is with hookworm and bare feet and muddy clay roads.” Indeed, she was at times violently critical of Tennessee Williams’s and Carson McCullers’s work, because she felt that they played on clichéd images of the region. “An identity is not to be found on the surface,” she wrote.

O’Connor’s vision of the postindustrial South—with its Winn-Dixie stores, its automobiles piled up in the junkyard of the Lord—as a modern version of the fall was all her own. But what fall? What loss of innocence? That of the slaves who became indentured servants and then “niggers,” and who dot her pages like flies? No: in O’Connor’s fictional universe, the whites in power are the only ones who can afford to be innocent of their surroundings. O’Connor’s most profound gift was her ability to describe impartially the bourgeoisie she was born into, to depict with humor and without judgment her rapidly crumbling social order. In “Revelation,” a 1964 story, she describes Mrs. Turpin, a woman who occupies herself “with the question of who she would have chosen to be if she couldn’t have been herself”:

> If Jesus had said to her before he made her, “There’s only two places available for you. You can either be a nigger or white-trash,” what would she have said? . . . She would have wiggled and squirmed and begged and pleaded but it would have been no use and finally she would have said, “All right, make me a nigger then—but that don’t mean a trashy one.” And he would have made her a neat clean respectable Negro woman, herself but black.

When Mrs. Turpin gets into a fight with a young white woman from Wellesley, while sitting in a doctor’s waiting room, her sense of propriety is upset; meaninglessness yawns before her like a great black hole. O’Connor allows us to see what Mrs. Turpin’s pride hides from her: how the blacks who work for her condescend to her, how they hide their intelligence so that she won’t be tempted to interfere in their lives. One of them asks Mrs. Turpin about the bruise she incurred during the fight and, before she can explain, continues, “Ain’t nothing bad happen to you! You just had you a little fall”—as if they all knew that Mrs. Turpin is protected in some special way by divine Providence. Mrs. Turpin describes the scene in the doctor’s office:

> “She said . . . something real ugly,” she muttered.
>
> “She sho shouldn’t said nothin ugly to you,” the old woman said. “You so sweet. You the sweetest lady I know.”
>
> “She pretty too,” the one with the hat on said.
>
> “And stout,” the other one said. “I never knowed no sweeter white lady.”
>
> “That’s the truth befo’ Jesus,” the old woman said. “Amen! You des as sweet and pretty as you can be.”
>
> Mrs. Turpin knew exactly how much Negro flattery was worth and it added to her rage. “She said,” she began again and finished this time with a fierce rush of breath, “that I was an old wart hog from hell.”
>
> There was an astounded silence.
>
> “Where she at?” the youngest woman cried in a piercing voice. “Lemme see her. I’ll kill her!”
>
> “I’ll kill her with you!” the other one cried.
>
> “She b’long in the sylum,” the old woman said emphatically. “You the sweetest white lady I know.”
>
> “She pretty too,” the other two said. “Stout as she can be and sweet. Jesus satisfied with her!”

Jesus is, perhaps, not as satisfied as Mrs. Turpin. No reader can help but be amused and disturbed by this passage, which is representative of O’Connor’s subtle observation of a world that was not her own, but which informed every inch of the one she inhabited. Blacks may have spent much of their lives on the margins, but she understood the ways in which they entered the circle. The theatrical modesty and duplicity exhibited by these blacks who are an audience for Mrs. Turpin’s troubles—despite the fact that she will never be one for theirs—are all just a part of the Southern code of manners.

O’Connor delighted in portraying the forms of domestic terrorism. It is a Catholic tenet that God judges by actions, but virtually all her white women characters judge by appearances. O’Connor greatly admired Faulkner. “Nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down,” she remarked of Southern writers’ relationship to the Master. But there is no Faulknerian Snopes in O’Connor’s fiction. What she describes is far more evil: the nice lady on the bus who calls you “nigger” by offering your child a penny; or the old woman who loves to regale her grandchildren with stories about

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the "pickaninnies" of her antebellum youth. These are women who wouldn't know grace if it slapped them in the face—which it often does. And why would any black person want to belong to the world that these women and their men have created?

For O'Connor, writing about integration was a way of exposing the dangers of clinging to the fiction of power. But, like Faulkner, O'Connor herself had difficulty assimilating the push toward integration which took the region so suddenly and violently in the fifties and sixties. She clung to the provincialism she satirized, and she was sometimes clumsy at conveying real life among blacks beyond her own circles—their class distinctions, their communication with one another apart from whites. The one false note in "The Displaced Person" (1955), for instance, comes when two black workers discussing the woman they work for fall into a kind of rural Amos 'n' Andy routine: "'Big Belly act like she know everything.' 'Never mind . . . your place too low for anybody to dispute with you for it.'" A curtain falls over O'Connor's insight—and her ear for speech. Luckily, she rarely tried to cover this ground—probably a prudent decision, given the murky and not altogether constructive works of some of the white liberals who did.

O'Connor received her M.F.A. in June of 1947, and Engle arranged for a fellowship that allowed her to stay at Iowa for another year and begin work on her unsettling first novel, "Wise Blood." Hazel Motes, O'Connor's Evangelical hero, wears a blue suit and a black hat and has white skin that crackles like pork rind in the hot Southern sun. He may look like a standard preacher, but he's not like any the good citizens of his adopted town, Taulkinham, have ever heard of. An itinerant prophet, he believes only in his own church, "The Church Without Christ . . . where the blind don't see and the lame don't walk and what's dead stays that way." Motes is a backward innocent, raised a Baptist, who, instead of accepting Christ into his life, decides to *be* him. By denying Jesus, he turns his back on those who came before him, and who no doubt learned much of their discourse from the black preachers whose rhetoric soaks the Southern soil. But Motes has a grudge against Jesus: he equates Him with sin, or more specifically with the sins that he himself has committed and cannot escape—not in the eyes of his relatives, rotten with fake piety, who believe that only the Lord can wash him clean and are no better than niggers who think that the Lord will make them white.

Of "Wise Blood," the writer and critic Stanley Edgar Hyman said, "Whatever caused Miss O'Connor to choose Protestant fundamentalism as her metaphor for Catholic vision, it was a brilliant choice. . . . It freed her from the constraints of good taste." O'Connor's humor lay in such paradoxes—in being an alienated Catholic in a world of Bible-thumpers, a single girl in a society of matrons. "It becomes more and more difficult in America to make belief believable, but in this the Southern writer has the greatest possible advantage. He lives in the Bible Belt," she wrote, and went on:

> The Catholic novelist in the South is forced to follow the spirit into strange places and to recognize it in many forms not totally congenial to him. . . . I think he will feel a good deal more kinship with backwoods prophets and shouting fundamentalists than he will with those politer elements for whom the supernatural is an embarrassment and for whom religion has become a department of sociology or culture of personality development. His interest and sympathy may very well go—as I know my own does—directly to those aspects of Southern life where the religious feeling is most intense and where its outward forms are farthest from the Catholic. . . . The result of these underground religious affinities will be a strange and, to many, perverse fiction, one which . . . gives us no picture of Catholic life, or the religious experiences that are usual with us, but I believe that it will be Catholic fiction.

In 1948, she was accepted at Yaddo as a writer-in-residence. There she was championed by several other writers: Alfred Kazin, Robert Lowell, and Lowell's wife-to-be, Elizabeth Hardwick, who once described O'Connor as being "like some quiet puritanical convent girl from the harsh provinces of Canada." Although Philip Rahv eventually published O'Connor's work in *The Partisan Review*, she first began to attract attention in *The Sewanee Review* and, through the Southern Agrarian John Crowe Ransom, in *The Kenyon Review*. With the exception of Kazin, virtually none of O'Connor's early supporters were Jewish, and O'Connor had little exposure to European immigrants, to intellectual debate as a form of socializing, or to agnosticism. The North was still a black-and-white world, though in a different way than she'd experienced it at home.

The following year, O'Connor secured a contract for "Wise Blood," with Holt, Rinehart. The association was not a happy one. She wrote to Paul Engle, describing the experience:

> I learned indirectly that nobody at Rinehart liked the 108 pages . . . that the ladies there particularly had thought it unpleasant (which pleased me). I told Selby [O'Connor's editor] that I was willing enough to listen to Rinehart criticism but that if it didn't suit me, I would disregard it. . . . To develope at all as a writer I have to develope in my own way. . . . I will not be hurried or directed by Rinehart. I think they are interested in the conventional and I have had no indication that they are very bright. . . . If they don't feel I am worth giving more money to and leaving alone, then they should let me go. . . . Selby and I came to the conclusion that I was "prematurely arrogant." I supplied him with the phrase.

It is incredible to read, in this age, a letter by a writer whose use of ego serves to protect, not inform, her work. O'Connor was soon released from her contract and, in 1950, signed with Robert Giroux, then at Harcourt, Brace, whom she had met through Robert Lowell. The year before, Lowell had also introduced her to the Catholic poet and translator Robert Fitzgerald and his wife, Sally. The young couple had children, and a home in Ridgefield, Connecticut; they needed a boarder to make ends meet, and O'Connor moved in that fall. O'Connor attended Mass daily with the Fitzgeralds. And, as her literary mastery deepened, she became better able to define her faith. She wrote to Elizabeth Hester:

> I am a Catholic peculiarly possessed of the modern consciousness, that thing Jung describes as unhistorical, solitary, and guilty. To possess this *within* the Church is to bear a burden, the necessary burden for the conscious Catholic.

As W. H. Auden put it, "In 1912, it was a real vision to discover that God loves a Pernod and a good fuck, but in 1942 every maiden aunt knows this and its time to discover something else He loves." Unlike the majority of Catholics the Fitzgeralds had known, O'Connor *lived* her faith. In a memoir about her, Robert Fitzgerald wrote admiringly of her inability to speak in abstractions: "She could make things fiercely plain. As in her comment, now legendary, on an interesting discussion of the Eucharist Symbol: 'If it's a symbol, to hell with it.'"

This most psychologically astute and least "psychological" of writers watched the action unfold in her stories and novels with a kind of amateur glee. As someone whose world view was in part ecclesiastical, O'Connor also knew that having faith involved hard, often dispassionate work: you did not embrace the leper at the side of the road because you "identified" with him; in fact, "because" wasn't even part of the equation. Seeing his skin drop off in flakes and handing over a fiver to sustain him were actions that called for description, not explanation. O'Connor understood comedy as the flashy side of tragedy. In her work, disaster puts on a red shirt and acts the fool for the Devil's amusement.

In 1950, while typing the first draft of "Wise Blood," O'Connor began to experience a heaviness in her arms. She was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. But later that year she became seriously ill. She was suffering from lupus, the disease that had killed her father. Lupus put her in and out of hospitals for the rest of her life. It caused her face to swell and her hair to fall out; it required her to give herself injections of cortisone, and, eventually, to walk with aluminum crutches because "the misery," as she termed it, affected her hips.

Except for a few speaking engagements and a visit to Europe with her mother, which included a pilgrimage to Lourdes ("I am going as a pilgrim, not a patient," she wrote. "I will not be taking any bath. I am one of those people who could die for his religion easier than take a bath for it"), O'Connor lived, from 1952 until her death, in 1964—at age thirty-nine—near Milledgeville, on Andalusia, a dairy farm that her mother had inherited. There she raised peacocks and ran a theology-and-literature reading group. She also wrote "The Violent Bear It Away," and the stories that appeared in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" and "Everything That Rises Must Converge." These stories glisten with intelligence and with startling anti-solipsism: she describes, never preaches.

O'Connor may have found comfort

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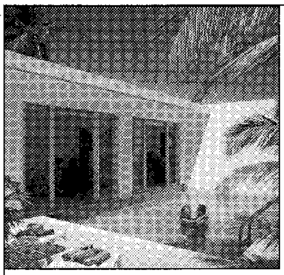
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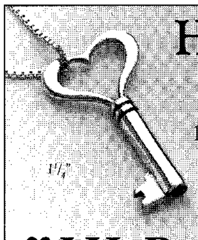
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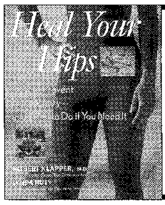

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in her religion, which allowed her to enter into a dialogue with God about suffering. But she was surprisingly intolerant of the religious struggle of others, particularly that of women intellectuals. "The life of this remarkable woman . . . intrigues me while much of what she writes, naturally, is ridiculous to me," O'Connor wrote of Simone Weil, a Jew who immersed herself in Catholicism. "Weil's life is the most comical life I have ever read about. . . . If I were to live long enough and develop as an artist to the proper extent, I would like to write a comic novel about a woman—and what is more comic and terrible than the angular intellectual proud woman approaching God inch by inch with ground teeth?" Was O'Connor instinctively recoiling from her own reflection in the mirror?

O'Connor, in return, was viewed as "homely" by most women of her time. Feminists have long looked up to her for her lack of compromise and her relative isolation, but they rarely factor in the emotional toll both took on her and her work—or the painful rewriting O'Connor has had to endure at the hands of memoirists such as Katherine Anne Porter, who emphasize how attractive she was, as if a woman must balance intelligence with prettiness to be legitimate. What was lacking in O'Connor's life—and in her art—was the spontaneous experience of intimate love, with its attendant joys and tedium and security. In O'Connor's fictional world, carnality, when it comes up at all, is brutal and hilariously symbolic. Mr. Shortley, in "The Displaced Person," for instance, "makes love" to his wife by placing a lit cigarette inside his mouth like the tip of the Devil's tail:

> When he had done his courting, he had not brought a guitar to strum or anything pretty for her to keep, but had sat on her porch steps, not saying a word, imitating a paralyzed man propped up to enjoy a cigarette. When the cigarette got the proper size, he would turn his eyes to her and open his mouth and draw in the butt and then sit there as if he had swallowed it, looking at her with the most loving look anybody could imagine. It nearly drove her wild and every time he did it, she wanted to pull his hat down over his eyes and hug him to death.

Sally Fitzgerald noted in a chronology that accompanies O'Connor's "Collected Works" (1988) that in the early fifties O'Connor had been in love with a visiting Danish textbook editor, but there is scant reference to him in the selected letters, "The Habit of Being" (1979), which was overseen by O'Connor's protective mother. Regina O'Connor's deep-seated respect for the social hierarchy created a gap between her and her daughter, and Flannery wrote amusingly in letters to friends about Regina's efforts to bridge it. In a 1953 letter to the Fitzgeralds:

> My mamma and I have interesting literary discussions like the following which took place over some Modern Library books that I had just ordered:
>
> SHE: "*Mobby Dick.* I've always heard about that."
>
> ME: "*Mow-by Dick.*"
>
> SHE: "*Mow-by Dick. The Idiot.* You would get something called *Idiot.* What's it about?"
>
> ME: "An idiot."

Much is left out or elided in the selected correspondence, the rights to which Regina controlled until her death, in 1995. But on the matter of faith the letters are often fierce and beautiful. The most conclusive statement appears in a letter written in the summer of 1955, to Hester:

> If you live today you breathe in nihilism. In or out of the Church, it's the gas you breathe. If I hadn't had the Church to fight it with or to tell me the necessity of fighting it, I would be the stinkingest logical positivist you ever saw right now. With such a current to write against, the result almost has to be negative. It does well just to be. Then another thing, what one has as a born Catholic is something given and accepted before it is experienced. I am only slowly coming to experience things that I have all along accepted. I suppose the fullest writing comes from what has been accepted and experienced both and that I have just not got that far yet all the time. Conviction without experience makes for harshness.

And yet she would have little by way of experience for the next nine years. Visitors came through Milledgeville. Admirers wrote letters. But, as the years went on, O'Connor's view of what Marianne Moore called "the strange experience of beauty" became the subject of her jokes, not of serious examination. Like many people crippled by illness, O'Connor cleaved to the world as she knew it. In her early work, she had taken an intense interest in hustlers and freaks and "niggers." "Whenever I am asked why Southern writers particularly have this penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one," she said once. But as her lupus progressed she spent less and less time discussing identity and its political implications, and, when she did, it often felt cavalier. "No I can't see James Baldwin in Georgia," she wrote in 1959 to a friend who had tried to arrange the introduction. "It would cause the greatest trouble and disturbance and disunion. In New York it would be nice to meet him; here it would not. I observe the traditions of the society I feed on—it's only fair. Might as well expect a mule to fly as me to see James Baldwin in Georgia." One feels a sense of loss on reading this, not only because of what such a union might have produced but also because of the limitations of O'Connor's time and place and the inevitable restrictions they placed on her art. Her regionalism was both a strength and a weakness; the emotional distance caused by her physical suffering was the axis on which both her comedy and her cruelty turned.

Had O'Connor and Baldwin met, they could have laughed together about their particular "Christ hauntings": Baldwin was the son of a minister and had preached himself; his experience was not so different from that of the mad, naïve evangelists who populate O'Connor's fiction. And what a discussion they could have had about whiteness! In 1955, after a stay at an all-white Swiss village, Baldwin wrote, "This world is white no longer, and it will never be white again"—meaning that blacks, as artists and men, could no longer be confined to the self-contained enclaves that had produced them. O'Connor's later fiction was, in large part, an acknowledgment of this, and of the fear and fury it produced in her world. That conversation is lost to history. But O'Connor's work is not. One can hear her syntax and thoughts in the stories of Raymond Carver, in Robert Duvall's brilliant movie "The Apostle," in the Samuel L. Jackson character's final monologue in "Pulp Fiction." Her work has moved away from the South as she defined and knew it, all the way to Hollywood, where Americans have embraced it, hearing in O'Connor's voice the uneasy and unavoidable union between black and white, the sacred and the profane, the shit and the stars. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Master of the Crossroads, *by Madison Smartt Bell (Pantheon; $30).* From 1793 until his incarceration and death, a decade later, in a French prison, Toussaint Louverture, the Haitian military general, led a revolt that resulted in the liberation of the country. This meticulously researched novel, which chronicles Toussaint's rise to power and conveys his compelling presence through accounts by contemporaries, has the feel of a tableau by Delacroix: a gorgeous swirl of individual and collective fervor.

A Question of Intent, *by David Kessler (PublicAffairs; $27.50).* This book imparts an enormous amount of legal, political, and scientific information while maintaining the narrative drive of a thriller. Recalling his years (1990-97) as commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Kessler, now the dean of Yale's medical school, focusses on the F.D.A.'s struggle to regulate tobacco, which began with research into whether nicotine is an addictive substance. Kessler's staff discovered that cigarette manufacturers knew more than they were telling about tobacco and its properties, but they responded to the agency's investigations with denial and obfuscation. A 1995 poll of voters indicated that even those who generally oppose regulation trusted the F.D.A. and didn't want it weakened. Last year, however, the Supreme Court ruled, 5-4, that the F.D.A. lacked authority over tobacco.

Shutterbabe, *by Deborah Copaken Kogan (Villard; $24.95).* How much patience would you have with a thrill-seeking cowboy photojournalist who bragged about his ignorance of the political hot spots he was sent to cover? Who dismissed his "concerned" documentarian colleagues' sense of purpose and titled chapters with the names of various women he had bedded in Pakistan and Paris and Romania? Well, reverse the genders and you get Kogan, whose account of her career reads like an extended episode of acting out. Her book commits the cardinal sin of personal narrative: it is self-involved and self-congratulatory without being self-aware.

The Element of Lavishness: Letters of Sylvia Townsend Warner and William Maxwell, 1938-1978, *edited by Michael Steinman (Counterpoint; $27.50).* Between 1936 and 1977, Sylvia Townsend Warner published more than a hundred and fifty stories in *The New Yorker.* Almost from the start, the writer William Maxwell was her editor. They hardly ever met (Maxwell lived in New York and Warner in Dorset), but they recognized in each other a kindred spirit, and their formal epistolary relationship soon quickened into deep, abiding love. The mesh of their minds was such that it is possible while reading these letters to lose track of who is writing: as Warner—speaking of a pair of blue-eyed cats—says, they "might have been composed by Bach for two flutes." Both writers excelled not only in arpeggios of description but in observations of the human heart so incisive that they constitute revelation.

Lobotomy, *by Dee Dee Ramone (Thunder's Mouth; $14.95).* This memoir by the bassist for the Ramones would please Nietzsche, who remarked, "I love only what a man has written with his blood." An Army brat born to a war-scarred German mother and an abusive American dad, Ramone survived drug addiction, male prostitution, stabbings, and drug-fuelled car crashes (including a hilarious one inside a car wash) to pen such enduring punk classics as "53rd and 3rd" and "Chinese Rocks." Today, the author is considered an elder statesman in a movement that, at least temporarily, brought rock and roll back to its democratic roots. His self-deprecating guide to the early, fervent days of punk rock closes with what could serve as its epitaph: "It gave everybody a chance to say something. That's revolution."

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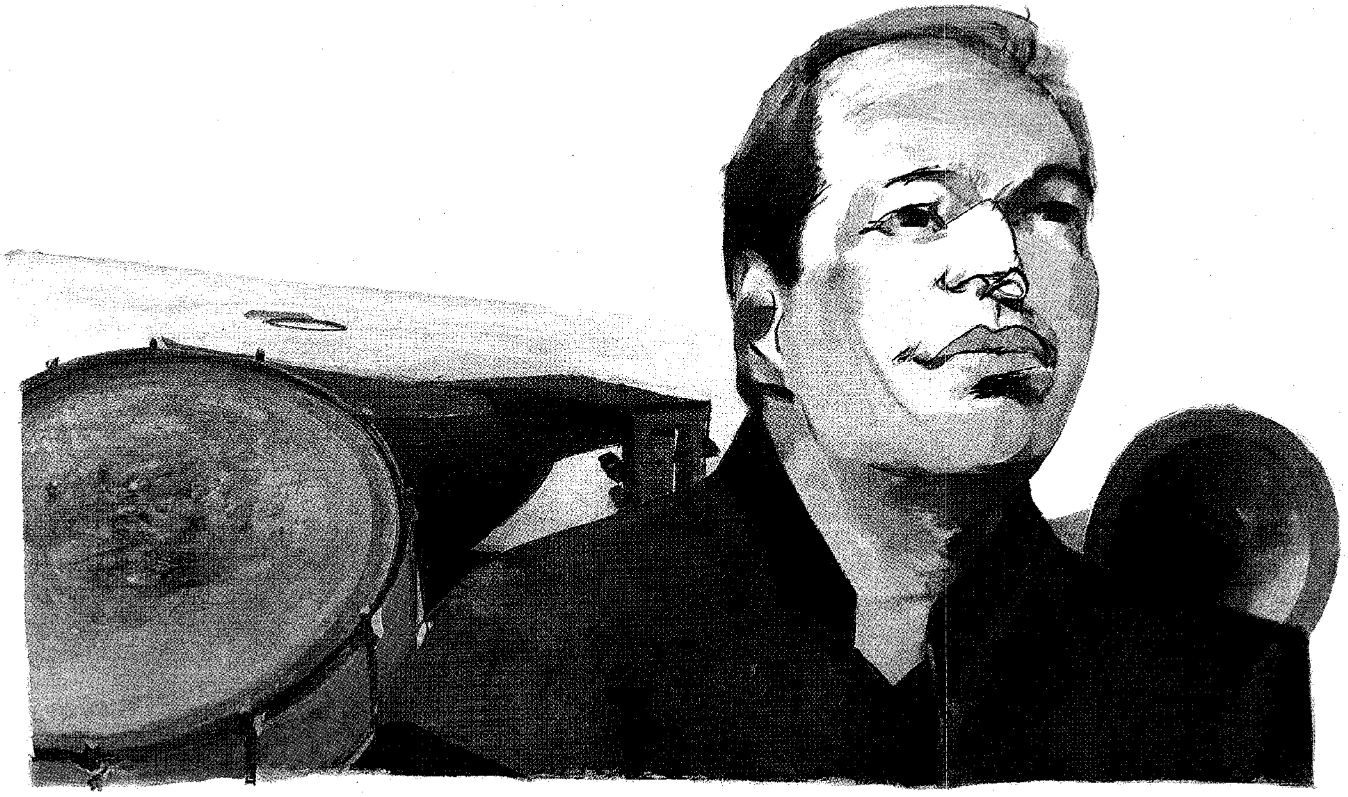
MUSICAL EVENTS

OUTSIDERS

Ferruccio Busoni and Frank Martin come in from the cold.

BY ALEX ROSS

The Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is a surprising venue for a contest between God and the Devil, but in the early, snowy days of January the old one-on-one was fought again. First, the bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff came to the New York Philharmonic for three performances of "Everyman," with words by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and music by Frank Martin. Everyman, having clung too long to worldly temptations, sees that his time is up and reaches for the grace of God. The composer, with a few soft, shuddering chords, tells us that it is within his grasp. A few days later, the forces of darkness gained some ground: the Met presented Ferruccio Busoni's "Doktor Faust," an unsentimental, faintly diabolical rewrite of the Faust legend, in which the good doctor proclaims the supremacy of the self to the bitter end. As Faust expires, Mephistopheles, in the guise of a night watchman, wryly reports, "The weather is changing, frost is in the air."



Thomas Quasthoff as Everyman: a noble voice brings to life Frank Martin's wartime songs about the modern struggle for faith.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

The intensity of "Doktor Faust" and "Everyman" seemed to catch audiences off guard. Perhaps we came with low expectations: Ferruccio Busoni and Frank Martin (pronounced "mar-*tanh*") are hardly household names. They are problem cases for historians of twentieth-century music, who like to divide up composers by nationality and style. Busoni, an Italian who thought like a German, and Martin, a Swiss who worshipped Debussy and Bach, fall outside the usual categories. Though their paths apparently never crossed, they had much in common: they were both masters of the art of counterpoint, gravitating toward pre-Romantic purity at a time when many composers were seeking ultimate complexity. Lately, they have found new audiences, perhaps because they never quite found a place in the frightful century that has just passed.

Busoni was a mesmerizing personality, a Faust of the fin de siècle. He was born in Tuscany in 1866, and lived, variously, in Trieste, Helsinki, Berlin, and Zurich; he died in Berlin, in 1924. As a pianist, he came to be ranked as one of the four or five greatest virtuosos in history; as a teacher, he held sway over an impressive group of disciples, among them Kurt Weill; as a composer, he made the risky decision to concentrate all his energy later in life on a single magnum opus, "Doktor Faust." His inspiration was not Goethe's high-minded "Faust" but the gruesome puppet plays that he had seen as a child. At the same time, he made Faust into an autobiographical figure, a Nietzschean artist-hero who perplexed the pedants of his time.

The first page of the score takes us into the heart of the Busoni laboratory: it consists of nothing but the "white notes" of the C-major scale, floating around in eerie chordal clouds. Busoni had a spectacularly varied musical vocabulary at his disposal: he played off Renaissance polyphony, Baroque and Classical forms, Wagnerian music drama, whole-tone and chromatic composition, and the songs of the street. The wonder of the score is that, for all its echoes and near-quotations—was that Dvořák's Cello Concerto? Brahms's Third Symphony? something by Sibelius?—it really sounds like nothing else. It is a hazy dreamscape, crisscrossed with dancing figures.

The Met "Faust," which runs through January 29th, is a co-production with the Salzburg Festival. Thomas Hampson repeated the success that he had with the title role in Salzburg, in 1999, although beauty of tone took precedence over vividness of character. Robert Brubaker, in the freakishly difficult role of Mephistopheles, maintained a bold, bright sound longer than anyone could reasonably expect. The conductor Philippe Auguin, stepping in for James Levine, whipped up a stylish performance with limited rehearsal time. Peter Mussbach's production, with sets by Erich Wonder, remains, for long stretches, a trial by tedium; the opera is transplanted to a vaguely lunar landscape, through which Faust wanders in a dirty-old-man overcoat. Yet certain of Wonder's images—the sinister elevated tracks that run through Faust's laboratory, the apparition of air-traffic-control patterns in the sky, the tongues of flame that leap from the heads and fingers of the evil spirits—have a gnawing power.

Little of this, however, prepares you for the impact of the final scene. Busoni died before he could complete it, but his idea was that Faust should achieve a self-assisted resurrection. "In the freedom I have won," he was to have said, "God and the Devil succumb." On an Erato recording, under the direction of Kent Nagano, you can hear Antony Beaumont's meticulous re-creation of what Busoni had in mind. But does that ending make moral sense? Can a man, even an educated German, redeem himself from a pact with the Devil? Instead of the Beaumont version, the Met used the original completion, by Philipp Jarnach, in which E-flat-minor chords signal a more conventional kind of doom. Wonder's closing image is in the same spirit: Faust, alone in a vast snowy field, holding in his arms the corpse of his child. He shuffles to the back of the stage as the music fades to black. Best not to ask what becomes of him.

Fans of the music of Frank Martin—let's all meet for coffee sometime—have hit a lucky streak this season. In November, Robert Spano led the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a performance of the song cycle "Cornet Christoph Rilke's Song of Love and Death," with the mezzo-soprano Monica Groop as a formidable soloist. Spano, Brooklyn's music director, is a phenomenon; even as his organization faces a potentially fatal financial crisis, he pulls together the most intellectually enticing and emotionally gripping orchestral concerts in New York. Then Quasthoff sang "Everyman" at the Philharmonic, with Kurt Masur conducting. A grand voice in a limited frame, Quasthoff seemed to embody the composer's spirit, which is pale on the surface and potent underneath.

Martin was born in Geneva in 1890, and lived until 1974. The details of his life are unremarkable. In photographs, he resembles the cordial pastor of a sleepy Swiss hamlet. He was, however, one of the greatest religious composers of the last two hundred years, with Messiaen his only contemporary rival. Messiaen, a perfect Catholic, celebrated God with exuberance and panache; Martin, the good son of a Calvinist minister, argued for faith as a constant struggle. For many years, he refused to release his Mass for Double Choir, written in 1922, on the ground that it was unworthy of the Lord. In the past few decades, the Mass has gone around the world, entrancing audiences with the archaic majesty of its language. Martin had a gift for immersing himself in styles of the past without seeming to imitate them; in his youthful Piano Quintet, for example, he does not allude to Bach so much as meld with him. (An ASV recording of this work, with members of the Britten-Pears Ensemble, is one of the gems of the Martin renaissance.)

In the thirties, Martin adopted an idiosyncratic version of Schoenberg's twelve-tone method, but he remained convinced that music had to have a tonal basis. He used twelve-tone rows to create what he called "gliding tonality," a harmony of ambiguous relations and shifting centers. One of his slow movements is marked "mysterious and elegant," and that phrase fairly sums him up. His first major work in the new idiom was "Le Vin Herbé," a dreamlike, light-fingered retelling of the story of Tristan and Isolde. Large-scale sacred works followed—"In Terra Pax," "Golgotha," "Le Mystère de la Nativité"—along with an opera based on Shakespeare's "Tempest," which, to judge from fragments that appear on a Chandos recording, is an undiscovered masterpiece.

For now, Martin's two great song cycles are his best ambassadors. "Song of Love and Death" is based on Rainer Maria Rilke's cycle of prose poems, which conjure up, in hallucinatory detail, the fate of a Rilke ancestor who died fighting the Ottoman Turks. The poems are strong enough on the page, but Martin's music, written in the midst of the Second World War, magnifies their air of foreboding to an almost unbearable degree. As the orchestration wavers between the delicacy of Ravel and the terror of Berg, the harmonic writing turns the screws of dissonance, creating a closed-in, panicky atmosphere. Even the spare final chords of the piece—B major darkening to minor—fail to ease the tension. Groop and Spano's performance haunted me for days.

"Everyman" was a welcome contrast, edging emphatically toward the light. Quasthoff's voice whispered and boomed, every word cutting cleanly through the air. Masur obtained better than routine playing from his orchestra. It's interesting that "Everyman," like "Cornet," ends with the device of major-key chords lapsing into minor. Why, then, does this music carry the charge of redemption—the spiritual release that Busoni denied his Faust? God, it seems, is in the details. There is a D-major chord; the middle note of the chord goes down a half step; it is now D minor. But that middle note, an F, is sustained as the other tones slide down, and the harmony becomes D-flat-major, washing over us like a balm. From there, the process is repeated: middle note falls down a semitone; dark minor encroaches; then the middle note is held as the others fall. Before we know it, we are resting on the heavenly simplicity of C major. Consolation, pain, consolation, pain, final consolation. The long notes hold the music together like nails. ♦

THE THEATRE

BLUEBIRDS OF UNHAPPINESS

The haunted houses of Proust and O'Neill.

BY JOHN LAHR

When Marcel Proust died, in 1922, at the age of fifty-one, only the first four installments of his seven-volume masterpiece, "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu," had been published. Like the narrator of his autobiographical novel, Proust had notoriously low self-esteem. "If only I could value myself more! Alas! It is impossible," he once said. His father and his younger brother were distinguished doctors who lived lives of social usefulness and robust heterosexuality; the cosseted, sickly Proust chose instead the avant-garde of suffering. Everything about his life—breathing, eating, sleeping, travelling, even sex—was problematic; his eyes, ears, stomach, skin, and psyche were so delicate and so easily irritated that he could only intermittently partake of the privileged world that was his inheritance. He was a connoisseur of collapse, a homosexual outsider who made a myth of retreat. Even his late success brought him little solace; he compared himself to a man too enervated by fever to enjoy a perfect soufflé.

In recent years, however, with the rise of the sound bite and the soap opera, Proust's work, which abounds in hearsay and melodrama, has made something of a comeback. Alain de Botton's 1997 "How Proust Can Change Your Life" turned the loquacious *maître* into a kind of best-selling self-help guru, and now Harold Pinter's austere screenplay adaptation of "À la Recherche," commissioned by Joseph Losey in 1972 but never filmed, has made Proust a star of the London stage, in an elegant production directed by Di Trevis at the Royal National's Cottesloe Theatre. The production's program quotes Kierkegaard's line "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." And the act of imaginative retrieval is the trajectory both of the play and of Proust's life—his way of redeeming an otherwise overwhelming sense of loss.

Here, bundled in overcoats in the summer for fear of catching a cold and occasionally stricken by asthmatic coughing fits, Proust's fictional surrogate, Marcel (the sympathetic and subtle Sebastian Harcombe), is forever on the periphery of events, peering from behind chairs, behind heads, behind windows—almost incidental to the scrum of high and low life that swirls around him, and sometimes only vaguely remembered by the members of the polite society he keeps. By staging Marcel from these refracted angles, Trevis pinpoints the essence of the writer and his style: Proust is a master of the obstructed view.

"Infirmity alone makes us take notice and learn, and enables us to analyze processes which we would otherwise know nothing about," Proust said, and the play links his enforced physical separation from life to his unique way of perceiving it. He listens. He scrutinizes. He overhears. He embellishes. He collects. Then he translates these minutely observed scraps into a fine literary filigree that both kills Time and captures it. The production manages to evoke the authentic whiff of wonder that is the by-product of Proust's attention to detail. The viewer, like Marcel, becomes a kind of detective, whose job it is to piece together a coherent narrative from a hodgepodge of contradictory evidence—tidbits of gossip, eavesdropping, sounds, smells, observation, and lies. It is not experience but the understanding of experience that counts for Proust and is so pertinent in our own analytic age.

This progress from mystery to clarity is a work of prestidigitation that Trevis's production performs before our eyes. By the start of the first act, the audience has had time to observe Alison Chitty's cunning backdrop: a yellow patch on a field of two-tone grays. ("Patch of yellow wall" are the first words of Pinter's screenplay.) In front of it, on the raked wooden stage, are a piano, a vase filled with flowers, some books, and a painting. As the play unfolds, these neutral props take on a series of charged narrative meanings, none of which are more sensational than those associated with the yellow patch. What looks at first like an abstract daub becomes by degrees a window, then a source of light, and by the end of the play something gorgeously precise: not a patch at all but the sunlit detail of a rooftop in Vermeer's "View of Delft"—a painting whose penetrating light features in Proust's story and serves as a metaphor for his artistic ambition. In the play's final beats—as the evening's epiphany and as a spectacular correlative for Proust's act of imaginative recreation—"View of Delft" scrolls up as the stage backdrop: a beautiful, behemoth, fully realized landscape. The play ends with Marcel delivering one last verbal "Proustian moment":

> Before my eyes, flashed Venice, a canal, a gondola. The sensation I had once felt on two uneven slabs in the Baptistry of St. Mark's came back to me and I saw again the azure-blue fresco and I remembered that when the waiter inadvertently knocked a spoon against a plate it reminded me of a line of trees seen from a railway carriage.

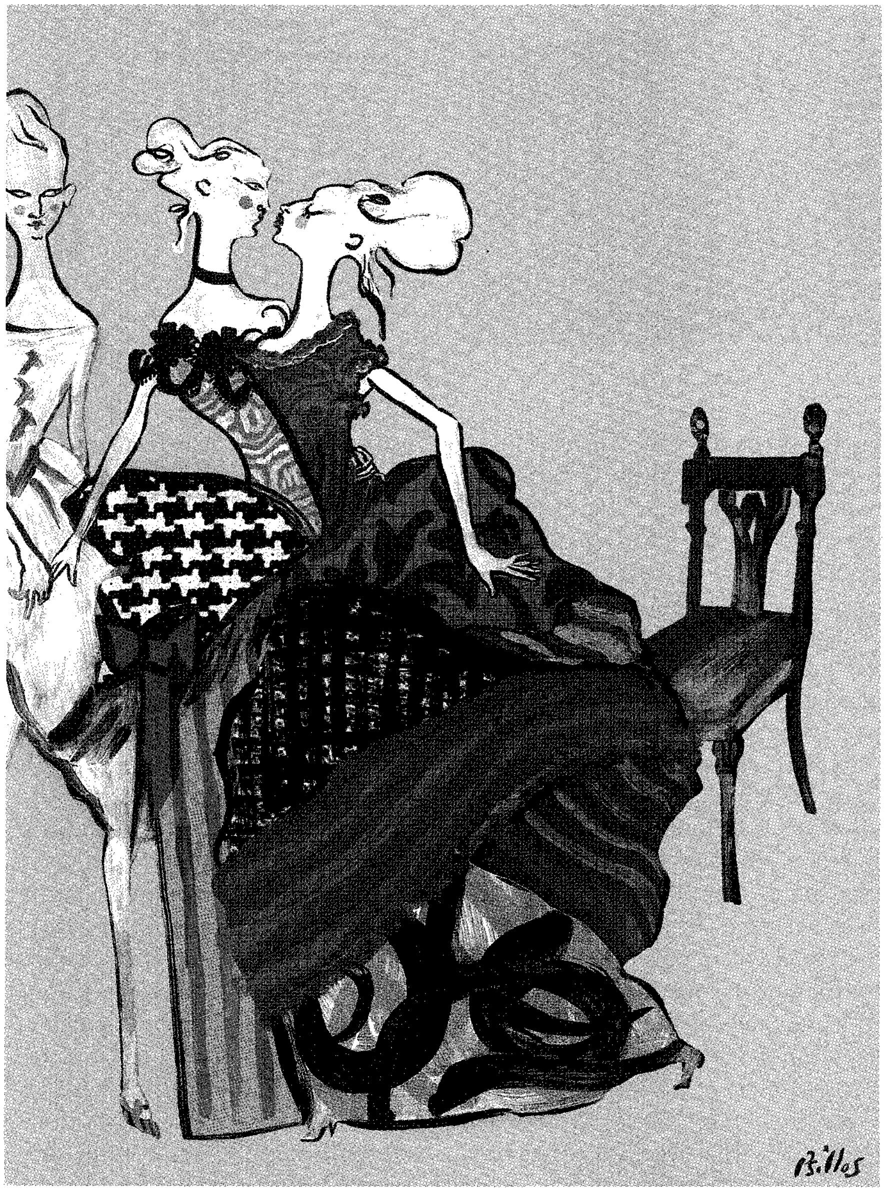
"It was time to begin," he concludes. What he was beginning was the writing, and the writing is what embraces Time, apes it, and, in Proust's case, overshadows the doom that comes with it. "To be honest, I've wasted my life," Marcel confesses, at one point. His book proves him wrong.

"One can of course reduce everything," Proust said. That includes this monumental book. When you take away Proust's asides, his descriptions, his atmospherics, his verbosity, which lend the book its particularly poignant undercurrents of leisure and loneliness, what's left is Proustian but not Proust. It is easy to admire Pinter's adaptation but hard, at times, to feel for its characters. The achievement here is in the presentation, not the penetration. Much of the play is spent pondering the possible lesbian inclinations of various characters: Swann (Duncan Bell) challenges Odette (the alluring Fritha Goodey), and Marcel, who is heterosexual in the novel, tries to get Albertine (the appealingly mercurial Indira Varma) to admit that she's a shirt-lifter—a fact that he confirms after her

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

death. But all these sexual scenes, including the sadomasochistic spectacle that Charlus makes of himself at a brothel, are notional and strangely unevocative. Still, Proust's satire of high society plays into Pinter's strong suit; he has great fun with the oafish social hubbub, especially the gauche climber Mme. Verdurin (the beaky, hilarious Janine Duvitski) and the well-orchestrated tedious badinage of the rich at play. Charlus (the excellent David Rintoul), Proust's great high-camp creation, who moves in the course of the novel from assertive masculinity to abject effeminacy—from palaces to gutters—is the perfect fodder for Pinter's gift for bombast. When Mme. Verdurin explains to Charlus that she has seated a baron next to an honored guest instead of him, because he is merely a marquis, Charlus replies, "Pardon me. I am also Duc de Brabant, Damoiseau de Montargis, Prince d'Oleron, de Carency, de Viareggio, and des Dunes. However, please do not distress yourself. It is not of the slightest importance, here." Trevis has a painterly eye for groupings and choreographs Proust's dance of time with her own dances, which throw off a lyricism and a sense of longing that resonate well with the book and make the evening, for all its limitations, a beautiful and provocative one.

"Griefs, at the moment when they change into ideas, lose some of their power to injure our heart," Proust said, and this may account for his curious optimism. What accounts for the pessimism in Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical masterpiece, "Long Day's Journey Into Night" (at London's Lyric Theatre), is the inability of "the four haunted Tyrones"—as O'Neill characterized his family—to transmute memory into some larger consoling idea and keep it out of their present. The play concentrates on the night, in 1912, that the Tyrones' young writer-son is diagnosed with tuberculosis, and his mother, Mary, lapses back into a morphine addiction that is a vestige of her hard life on the road with her tightfisted actor-manager husband. These hapless characters don't need to search for the past. It has been preserved in the family's punishing litanies of recrimination and regret. In the play's stunning last lines, the past seeps even into Mary's drugged present: "Then in the spring something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I fell in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time."



Proust's satire of French high society plays into Pinter's strong suit.

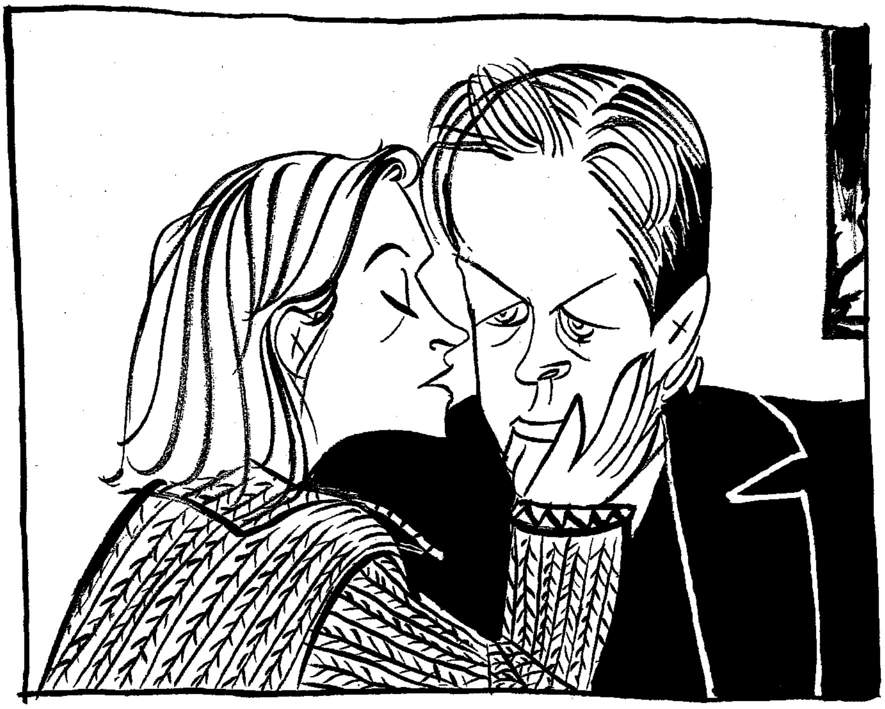
In Robin Phillips's grossly overpraised production, the power of this final speech is undercut by typically clumsy direction. Jessica Lange is allowed to deliver Mary's lines while slumped to her knees, and she pauses amateurishly before delivering the last sentence. Still, although her quavering voice and birdlike mannerisms often display the influence of Katharine Hepburn's performance in the movie version, Lange seems to understand Mary's emotional fragility and harrowing isolation, and she turns in a competent performance that dominates the lopsided production. Phillips's shallow staging is unable to bring the gravity of O'Neill's male characters into play. The men are woefully miscast; none of them—Charles Dance as the curiously patrician James Tyrone, Paul Rudd as Jamie, and Paul Nicholls as Edmund—have a hint of torment or exhaustion in their souls, and they cannot even approach the edgy sense of desperation and tragedy that the script so brilliantly dissects. It's like bantamweights going up against heavyweights: they can throw the punches, but they have no clout. The fog that envelops the Tyrones' waterfront home and is the metaphor for their ill-fated, ghostly lives also becomes a metaphor for the blinkered production, in which everyone, with the possible exception of Lange, seems to have lost his way. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

LIV AND LOVE

Splitting up in "Faithless" and fighting dirty in "Snatch."

BY ANTHONY LANE



Lena Endre and Krister Henriksson as lovers in Liv Ullmann's "Faithless."

Winter is the right season for a celebration of Liv Ullmann. She was never one for the sunny fulfillment of high hopes, and even her more awestruck fans, among whom I count myself, would be unlikely to confuse her with Debbie Reynolds. In recent years, Ullmann has shifted from performing to directing, and the first thing we hear in her new film, "Faithless," is a man's voice, reminding us of the ruin that is wrought by divorce: "It penetrates the seat of all anguish, forcing it to life." Put like that, it does sound painful. Those in danger of penetration include Marianne (Lena Endre), an actress, and her husband, Markus (Thomas Hanzon), a conductor of international repute. Their best friend is David (Krister Henriksson), a theatre director, and one of those unfortunate creatures who look drunk even when they aren't. To be fair, David often *is* drunk.

After years of amiability, he and Marianne meet in Paris and start an affair. Markus learns of their love, although, given that the script is by Ingmar Bergman, it's not exactly a love of which anyone could be jealous. The marriage, which seemed steady as a rock, dissolves like a lump of sugar, and there is worse to come: "What am I doing to Isabelle?" Marianne asks herself. Isabelle (Michelle Gylemo) is her daughter—aged nine when the tale begins, but a whole lot older, you feel, by the bitter end. Mother and child are breakfasting in bed together when Marianne delivers the news of the split; Isabelle calmly gets off the bed and walks out the door. It is the only slow-motion shot in the film, and with justice, since what the girl is leaving behind is not merely the scraps of her breakfast but the mortal remains of her childhood.

Marianne's story is encased in a narrative shell, one that I found hard to crack. She isn't there at the start; instead she is conjured up by an old man (Erland Josephson), who lives and writes on a scrubby, wind-thrashed coast, beside an iron sea. Given that his character's name is Bergman, and that the real Ingmar Bergman lives and writes on the Swedish island of Faro, I don't think it presumptuous to peg this, in part at least, as an autobiographical project. Whether Marianne is summoned like a spirit, or whether Bergman is breathing on embers to revive an old flame, is never clear; throughout the picture, she tends to muscle into his mind, demanding definition ("Am I an actress?") and, in the closing minutes, expressing a crisp disappointment with the figure that she has cut. However strange you find all this, it does tie in to the film's suggestion that fate is not so much a weapon, hammering down on us, as a fraying tangle, often of our own knotting, into which we tumble.

That fall is a sad sight, though not for the obvious reasons. As things unfold, it becomes ever harder to mind what is happening to Marianne and her men; Lena Endre is finely focussed in the principal role, but her plight feels airless and indulgent, and young Michelle Gylemo's lithe solemnity is a rebuke to the childish grownups on display. The sadness arises, I think, from the echo—the long, forlorn shadow—of Ingmar Bergman himself, as Ullmann, the staunchest of his leading ladies and the bearer of his child (though not one of his six wives), strives to honor his legacy. You sense it throughout "Faithless": in the name of the heroine (Ullmann's own character in "Scenes from a Marriage," made for TV, was called Marianne); in the music box that opens the movie with Papageno's tune from "The Magic Flute," the opera that Bergman filmed in 1974; and, above all, in the remorseless reference to the theatre. An alarming number of Bergman's characters, too, tended to be actors and directors, although I was never convinced by that compulsion; he was so naturally dogged an inquisitor into human theatricality—into the helpless ease with which we doff and don our social masks—that he didn't really need to labor the point. Still, if you saw his "Sawdust and Tinsel" or "The Rite," you will be content with the stage sets and bedrooms of "Faithless"; the adulterous arena, in Paris, is decked in blood red, like a production of "Tosca," and the plate of grapes and cheese on Marianne's bed points not to an energy-boosting, precoital snack but to an excess of zeal in the props department.

TOM BACHTELL

There is one astonishing moment when Marianne approaches a mirror and rests her head against it, as if to cool a fever. The background is pure darkness, and the mirror has no frame, so she appears to be asking for succor from her double. The scene is a nod to "Persona," and to the soundless climax at which the features of Ullmann (playing an actress, of course) merged and melted into those of Bibi Andersson, her nurse. Gazing at "Faithless," I badly wanted to watch Ullmann's own face again, with its smooth forehead—she was literally highbrow material—and the all too bruisable lips. Bergman was the high priest of emotional distance, but Ullmann, among his company of players, always seemed the most likely to bridge the gap; has any other actress dared to register motherliness, the give-and-take of consolation, so close to sexual need? Maybe we can't see "Faithless" clearly; maybe the problem is not the film, with its retro assumptions of despair, but us. We are so far from watching movies for the reasons that we did thirty or forty years ago that the screen almost feels like the wrong place for such matters—these worst-case scenarios, these marriages setting sail for the rocks. To get in shape for "Faithless," go and see "Persona" in a new print at Film Forum, or the Liv Ullmann season that runs until January 28th at the American Museum of the Moving Image. If you feel wedded to the cinema of today, it's time you were unfaithful.

Only the clouded of vision, or the shrunken of soul, could fail to be enraptured by the latest Guy Ritchie extravaganza. Emboldened by his success with "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels," the young British director has gone for the big one: Babylonian budget, sweeping locations, dazzling deployment of multiple cameras, tender use of a child character, and the near-religious radiance of a female icon.

Such, at any rate, was Mr. Ritchie's wedding to Madonna, which took place recently in the Scottish Highlands. By way of contrast, he has also taken time to deliver another of his snarling little faux-gangster sagas. This one goes by the charming, take-your-grandmother title of "Snatch," and, once again, it features an assortment of feral men, each of them vying not merely to steal a giant diamond but to outdo his fellows in ungentlemanly conduct. We can tell that they are tough nuts, because few will admit to a normal name; we have Franky Four Fingers (Benicio Del Toro), Bullet Tooth Tony (Vinnie Jones), Brick Top (Alan Ford), Turkish (Jason Statham), and so on. The fashion for thick skins, and its matching contempt for regular feelings, is so pronounced in Ritchie's world that nothing could take its citizens by surprise, yet you can't help feeling that, were someone called Murray or Dave to show up, the whole place would go into shock.

Glancing off the jewel heist is another plot, founded on the fixing of boxing fights—bare-knuckled, needless to say. The secret weapon is Brad Pitt, who plays One Punch Mickey O'Neil. I think he is supposed to be Irish, or possibly a wild Romany, but no one can tell, since Pitt has wrapped himself in an accent as thick as a blanket. The other characters strain to catch his mumbling drift, as does the audience, and you begin to wonder if he is making sport of those rusty Cockney voices that left American ears bleeding in the wake of "Lock, Stock." The presence of a superstar always throws minor films into awkward relief, and for once I was glad for the mismatch; everyone else in "Snatch" is trying so hard—not least Ritchie himself, with his split screens, his freeze-frames, his closed-circuit TV footage, and the tic of his heebie-jeebie editing—that to watch Pitt being funny and relaxed is a balm to the eyes. His character is supposed to lose, but, true to his fists, he just can't stop himself from winning. In years to come, this tricksy but obnoxious picture will be forgotten for its style but analyzed by college students for its allegorical intent: quiet American beats up loudmouthed Brits. ♦

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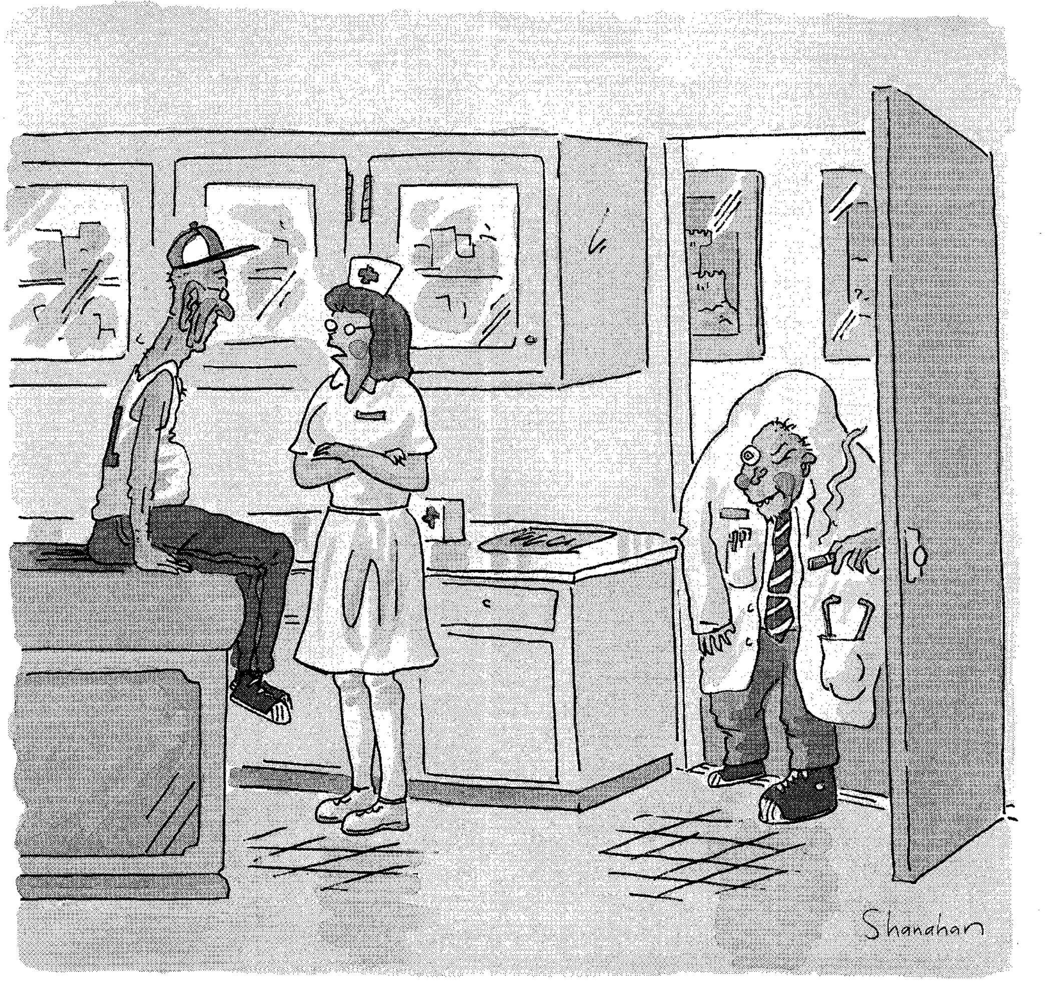


"You'll feel better when you see the doctor."

The *New Yorker* cartoon-caption contest is a venerable tradition, stretching back well over a year. Why it was started no one now living can remember. It may have had something to do with the irrational exuberance of an era when heating bills were low, Internet stocks were high, and the country was between Bushes.

This year, a record fourteen thousand entries flowed into contest headquarters (you can take a look at them at www.cartoonbank.com/contest_entries.asp), and the enormous mass of entries was subjected to sophisticated computer analysis. Many readers interpreted the drawing, by Danny Shanahan, as referring to a work of nineteenth-century literature, to our current health-care mess, or to the medical breakthroughs that promise to transform and terrify us. The computer analysis boiled the basic comic elements of the proposed captions down to key words. Here is a partial list, in descending order of frequency:

H.M.O. (1001), Notre-Dame (484), hunch (298), Quasi (234), side effects (232), eye (212), Dr. Igor (205), bells (203), Viagra (202), plastic surgeon (195), ear (191), ringing (184), Quasimodo (112), drugs (100), gene (99), Dr. Frankenstein (88), transplants (81), Dr. Jekyll (79), Dr. Modo (77), organ donor (75), medication (71), brain (63), tinnitus (52), Mr. Hyde (49), Paris (49), Bush (47), Gore (44), Esmeralda (42), radiology (41), Hunchback (39), Hugo (39), hiccups (35), France (35), Transylvania (23).

Some noteworthy entries:

"The gene therapist will see you now." (Kurt Leafstrand)

"And be sure to tell him about the ringing in your ears." (Robert Taub)

"It stands for Hideous Myopic Ogre." (Anne Swan)

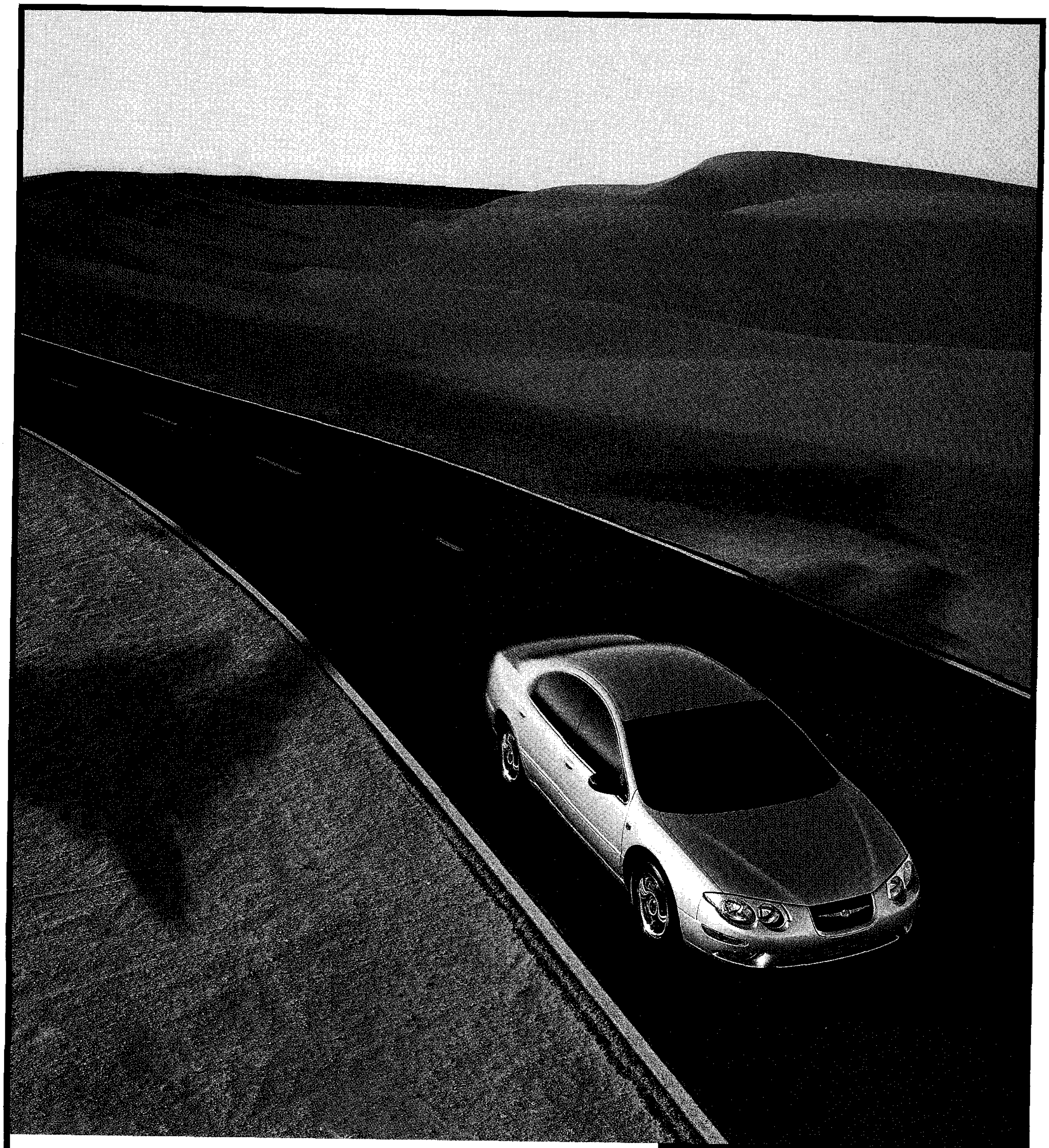
"Parlez-vous Français?" (James Aspinwall, Bruce Ando, and Wick Goodspeed)

"Don't open your eyes until I tell you. The doctor has cured thousands of cases of hiccups." (Donald Tackett)

"Not to worry—Dr. Igor will make a new man out of you." (Ed Gray)

"Meet the face behind the Home Laser Eye Surgery Kit." (Sharon Wood)

The winner of the contest is Lauren Helmstetter, of Leawood, Kansas. Her caption refers only to what is pictured in the cartoon. She uses the drawing's elements to transform a straightforward, uncontrived, and unfunny statement into a joke. That's the whole idea. She got it, and so do we. ♦



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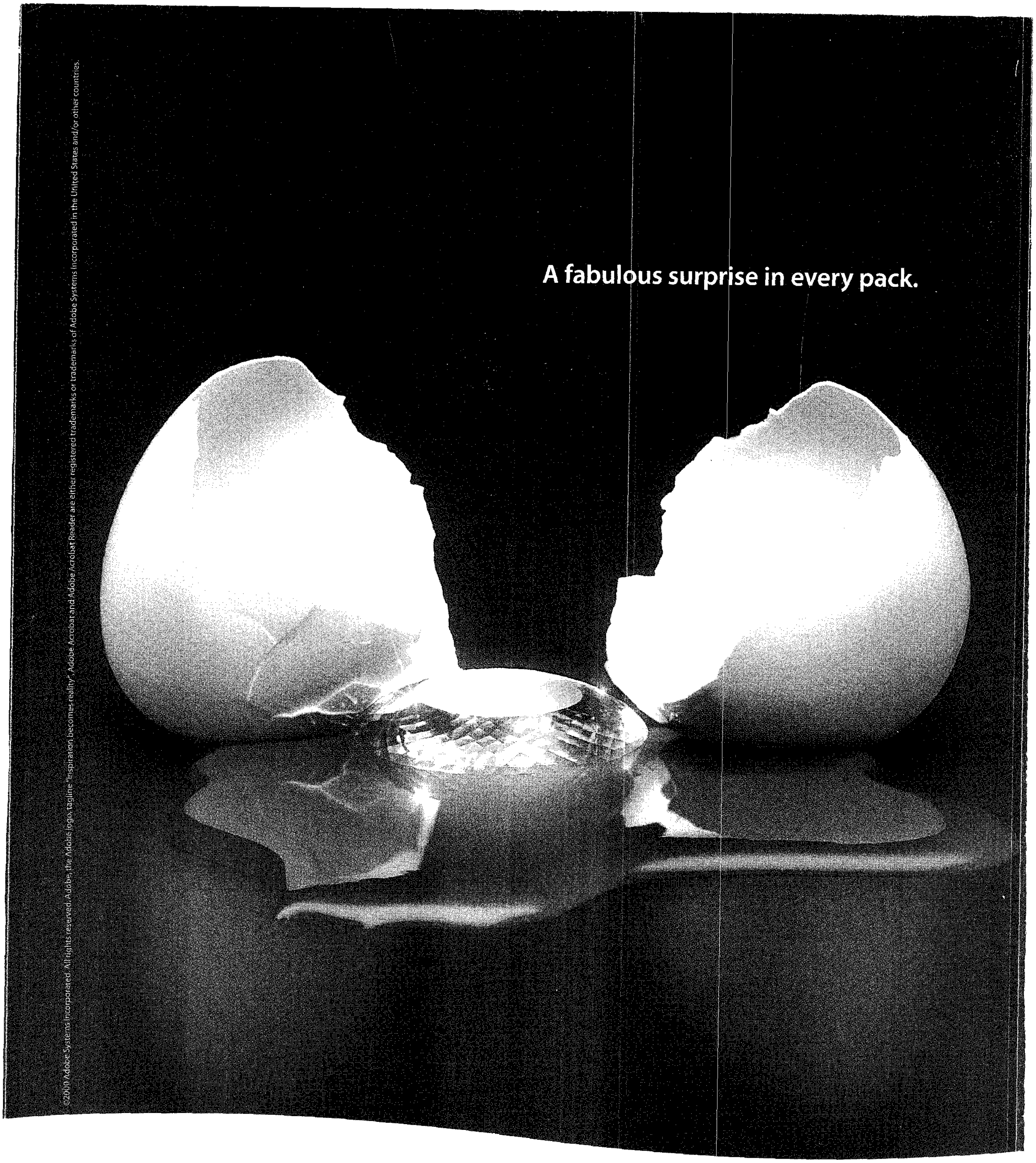
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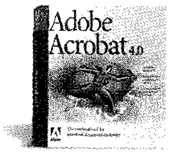
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